FRENCH-CANADIAN BEGINNINGS IN AN AMERICAN COMMUNITY: LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS, 1868-1886

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ABSTRACT

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Between 1860 and 1900 roughly 600,000 French Canadians migrated from French Canada to New England to seek jobs in burgeoning industrial centers like Lowell, Lawrence, and Fall River, Massachusetts. This dissertation looks at how French Canadians, as individuals and as part of a developing ethnic community, experienced the early years of settlement--the 1870s and 1880s--in one urban-industrial textile center, Lowell. It explores how Franch Canadians shaped and controlled their own lives in a society and culture which was very different from the one they had left by focusing on how they used and modified their cultural heritage in the adjustment process.

The dissertation opens with overviews of the kind of society French Canadians were leaving and the kind of society they were entering. Next, it investigates how

these immigrants earned their livings in the 1870s and analyses the occupational distribution of the French-Canadian populace in relation to the entire Lowell population. It describes the arrival experience, family and household living arrangements, residence and neighborhood patterns, and housing and working conditions. It also analyses the relationship between family economy and standard of living. Finally, it looks at the development of a French-Canadian community from the points-of-view and needs of two groups, the working class and the emerging middle-class lay elite.

Because this dissertation seeks to understand how ordinary immigrants adjusted to their new lives, it is based largely on non-traditional sources associated with "the new social history." Manuscript censuses, city directories, vital statistics records, and the like provide information about people whose lives would otherwise remain largely inaccessible to the historian.

Existence was difficult for French Canadians in the 1870s and 1880s in Lowell. Most became part of the city's working class and held, to a greater extent than other working-class people, unskilled, low-paying jobs. Anxieties related to basic survival haunted many homes. Working conditions were deplorable in the textile factories where many women and children were employed. Housing conditions varied, but French Canadians frequently lived

in sub-standard buildings in unsanitary surroundings. Poor working and living conditions contributed to a high death rate among French Canadians, especially among children.

Although life at a material level could be rather brutal, French Canadians did not become passive victims. Instead, they relied a good deal on past cultural experiences--on traditional institutions and inherited patterns of thought and behavior--to help them impose some control over their own destinies. From the outset the family functioned as the primary organizational institution. French Canadians usually migrated to Lowell as part of a nuclear-family unit. They used this structure and familial-kinship values to develop assistantship customs for new arrivals and to establish French-Canadian neighborhoods; they modified the notion of the family farm economy to suit the exigencies of industrial, working-class existence. The Catholic Church served as another important organizing institution. Along with the family, it provided cultural continuity with French-Canadian society and was a source of psychological stability. It also sponsored social-service and benefit associations and a parochial school system. These institutions, in conjunction with the formation of a small lay elite which was associated with parish activities, provided the foundation stones for the development of a French-Canadian community. A commitment

to survivance (cultural survival) created a sense of peoplehood and unity among all French Canadians in the initial settlement years. Some immigrants possessed entrepreneurial values; although the opportunity structure was limited in Lowell, a few ambitious men achieved upward social mobility within a few years.

PREFACE

By 1900 one in every ten New Englanders, roughly 575,000 people, was of French-Canadian stock.[1] By 1930 more than one million first and second generation French-Canadian immigrants lived in the United States. Today the total approaches five million if all generations of French Canadians and people of French-Canadian stock are counted.[2] But French Canadians in the United States have been under-recognized and understudied.[3] The paucity of literature on this immigrant group is due partly to the failure of Franco-Americans--the twentieth-century designation for French Canadians and their descendants--to study their past. Furthermore, before the resurgence of interest in ethnicity as an important factor in American history in the 1960s and 1970s, it was difficult for scholars to get anything

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[1]Ralph D. Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England, 1840-1900: A Geographical Analysis" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1968), p. 2. "French-Canadian stock" in the United States census designates persons born in Canada whose mother tongue is French as well as persons not born in Canada who nonetheless report one or both parents as Canadian-born with French as the mother tongue.

[2]Richard S. Sorrell, "The Historiography of French Canadians in the United States," Immigration History Society (May, 1979), p. 7., n. 1.

[3]Ibid., pp. 4-6.

published on French Canadians.[4]

Most of our knowledge of French-Canadian immigrant life in New England in the nineteenth century has come from memoirs of members of the French-Canadian immigrant elite or from general histories of community development. The dominant motif in this literature is success: French Canadians, because they created strong, tightly unified communities, maintained their cultural identity (survivance) in their new homes, and they adjusted somewhat gradually but smoothly to American socioeconomic realities. The story which emerges, then, is progressive, almost lyrical. One study, for instance, refers to "the charm and atmosphere of the early immigrant years" and "to the romance of heroic days."[5]

Within the last 25 years a few works have appeared which have explored some aspects of the French-Canadian

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[4]Ibid., p. 6. A few scholars such as Mason Wade and Iris Saunders Podea produced valuable articles in the pre-1960 period. See Mason Wade, "The French Parish and Survivance in Nineteenth Century New England," Catholic History Review 36 (July, 1950):163-89; and Iris Saunders Podea, "Quebec to 'Little Canada:' The Coming of the French Canadians to New England in the Nineteenth Century," in The Aliens: A History of Ethnic Minorities in America (New York, 1970), ed. by Leonard Dinnerstein and Frederick Cople Jaher, pp. 205-15. Podea's article first appeared in 1950 in the New England Quarterly.

[5]Jacques Ducharme, The Shadow of the Trees (New York, 1943), pp. 141 and 221. See also Robert Rumilly, Histoire des Franco-Americains (Montreal, 1958).

immigrant experience in New England more critically. Some scholars have dealt in a sophisticated fashion with French-Canadian migration patterns between Quebec and the United States and have related these patterns to socioeconomic conditions in both countries.[6] Recent community studies, which have generally been undertaken by Franco-Americans, consider the lives of ordinary, working-class people.[7]

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[6]See especially Sylvie Rimbert, "L'immigration franco-canadienne au Massachusetts," Revue Canadienne de geographie 8, no. 3-4 (July-October, 1954):75-85; Albert Faucher, "L'émigration des Canadiens français aux XIXe siècle: position du problème et perspectives," Recherches sociographiques 5 (September-December, 1964):277-319; Gilles Paquet, "L'émigration des Canadiens-français vers la Nouvelle-Angleterre, 1870-1910: prises de vue quantitatives," Recherches sociographiques 5 (September-December, 1964): 319-70; Yolande Lavoie, L'émigration des Canadiens aux Etats-Unis avant 1930: mesures du phénomène (Montreal, 1972); and Vicero "Immigration of French Canadians to New England." Useful older studies include Marcus Lee Hansen, The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples (New York, 1940); and Leon Truesdell, The Canadian Born in the United States: An Analysis of the Statistics of the Canadian Element in the Population of the United States (New Haven, 1943).

[7]See particularly Gerard Blazon, "A Social History of the French Canadian Community of Suncook, New Hampshire (1870-1920)" (Masters thesis, University of New Hampshire, 1974); Peter Haebler, "Habitants in Holyoke: The Development of the French-Canadian Community in a Massachusetts City, 1865-1910" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire, 1974); and Michael Guignard, "Ethnic Survival in a New England Mill Town: The Franco-Americans of Biddeford, Maine" (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1977). An older work, a Ph.D. dissertation by George F. Theriault, suffers by comparison with the above-cited works, both in methodology and in conceptualization. See George F. Theriault, "The Franco-Americans in a New England Community: An Experiment in Survival" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1951); and his article "The Franco Americans in

Two scholars, Daniel J. Walkowitz and Tamara K. Hareven, have investigated the development of the working class in towns where many French Canadians resided.[8] Their research provides new insights on how French Canadians learned to cope with and adjust to an urban, industrial working-class way of life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; both have looked at the role which French-Canadian cultural traditions and behavior patterns played in the accommodation process.

The findings of these newer works reinforce the contention of older studies that French Canadians in New England were dedicated to preserving their ethnicity through strong community structures. But these newer studies also discredit the earlier romantic assumption that the ethnic

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New England," in Canadian Dualism (Toronto, 1960), ed. by Mason Wade, pp. 392-411. Other interesting recent research includes Leon F. Bouvier, "A Geneological Approach to the Study of French-Canadian Fertility: 1650-1950" (Masters thesis, Brown University, 1964); and Richard Santerre, "Le roman franco-américain en Nouvelle-Angleterre, 1875-1943" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston College, 1974).

[8]See Daniel J. Walkowitz, Worker City, Company Town: Iron and Cotton-Worker Protest in Troy and Cohoes, New York, 1855-1884 (Urbana, Illinois, 1978); Tamara K. Hareven, "Family Time and Industrial Time: Family and Work in a Planned Corporation Town, 1900-1924," Journal of Urban History 1 (May, 1975):365-89; Tamara K. Hareven, "The Laborers of Manchester, New Hampshire, 1912-1924: The Role of Family and Ethnicity in Adjustment to Industrial Life," Labor History (Spring, 1975):249-65; and Tamara K. Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory Town (New York, 1978).

survival of French Canadians as a group went hand in hand with rapid upward social mobility for many individuals.

This thesis explores both of these facets of the French-Canadian immigrant experience; it looks at how French Canadians as individuals and as part of a developing community experienced the early years of settlement (ca. 1868 to 1886) in one urban-industrial textile center, Lowell, Massachusetts. Instead of concentrating on one historical problem, then, such as community development, social mobility, or immigrant culture over several decades, this study investigates all of these problems over a shorter time period, with emphasis on the decade of the 1870s.

Because one of the aims of this thesis is to understand the lives of ordinary, largely working-class French-Canadian immigrants, it makes extensive use of non-traditional sources and methods which are now associated with "the new social history." Specifically this means the use of quantifiable data: manuscript census returns, city directories, and vital statistics records. These sources are imperfect. For instance, historians working with census returns have discovered that enumerators missed people; many who lived on corner houses were inadvertently excluded and boarders were frequently omitted. Inaccuracies in returns were common. Immigrants especially, because of language difficulties or fear of officials, did not always answer

questions properly or truthfully. Census enumerations also occurred over a several month period. The returns, therefore, represent different populations on different days living in different neighborhoods rather than a snapshot picture of a population at one specific time.[9] City directories were much less inclusive than censuses.[10] Vital statistics records suffered from lack of inclusiveness and from inaccuracies in reportings.[11] Nevertheless, used carefully and creatively in conjunction with more traditional literary material, these sources are quite useful, even invaluable. For they provide information about people whose lives would otherwise remain largely inaccessible to the historian.

In the course of researching this thesis specific methodological difficulties related to studying French Canadians from these sources arose, most notably the problem of distinguishing French Canadians from English Canadians in

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[9]Peter Knights, The Plain People of Boston, 1830-1860 (New York, 1971), p. 4. See also appendix A, "Use of the 1870 United States Manuscript Census Returns."

[10]Knights, Plain People, pp. 127-39. Interestingly, directory enumerators in Boston did not avoid slums or working-class neighborhoods.

[11]This is particularly true for Lowell birth records, at least in terms of French Canadians who appear to have sometimes neglected to register their children's births.

the manuscript census returns of 1870. Methodological and conceptual problems related to analysis of occupational structure, family relationships, and household composition from the manuscript census presented additional challenges. A large amount of time and energy, therefore, was expended on devising appropriate research strategies. For this reason it was not possible to link findings related to work with the 1870 census to later censuses. Most particularly, time pressures did not permit an exhaustive exploration of social mobility and assimilationist trends among French Canadians. However, some assessment of the way these related processes were affecting these immigrants in the 1870s and 1880s was made. More importantly, though, since crucial methodological problems were solved in the course of researching and conceptualizing this thesis, a solid foundation for future work on these topics now exists.

This study deals with more than a static analysis of occupational and family and household structures. It also looks at the development of a French-Canadian community in the years of initial settlement, from 1868 to 1886. In addition to describing the institutional structure of the community it considers the culture of its members and asks how life in Lowell began to modify the values, behavior patterns, and expectations which French Canadians brought with them from Quebec.

The main thrust of this thesis is revealed in the organization of the chapters. The first and second chapters introduce the context and settling by providing an overview of the kind of society French Canadians were leaving as well as the kind of society they were entering. The third chapter deals with a methodological problem which had to be solved before work with the census, directories, and vital statistics could be undertaken--how to identify French Canadians in these sources. The fourth chapter discusses how French Canadians earned their livings and analyses the occupational distribution of the French-Canadian populace in relation to the entire Lowell population. The fifth chapter describes the arrival experience, family and household living arrangements, residence and neighborhood patterns, and housing conditions. The sixth chapter analyses the family economy and the standard of living of Lowell French Canadians in the 1870s, and the seventh chapter looks at the development of the French-Canadian community from the points-of-view and needs of two groups, the working class and the emerging middle-class lay elite. The conclusion summarizes the major findings of this study.

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I would like to thank my advisor, Fred Bode, whose questions and criticisms helped me clarify the scope and aims of this thesis. I am indebted to Don Ginter, who along with my advisor, spent many hours with me discussing methodological and conceptual problems related to my research. Fred and Don's sustained enthusiasm regarding my research stimulated my thinking and challenged me to explore important problems which might have been neglected without their input. I am also grateful to a number of historians who have read parts of my thesis and offered valuable criticisms: Bettina Bradbury, Marta Danylewycz, William Hubbard, Michael Piva, Ron Rudin, and Michael Sibalis. Thanks are due to Richard Santerre, the parish historian of the first French-Canadian Catholic Church in Lowell. Richard gave selflessly and graciously of his time on several occasions to discuss with me his extensive knowledge of the Lowell French-Canadian community, past and present. He opened his private library collection to me. I also wish to express my appreciation of three friends who were not intellectually involved in this thesis project, but who nevertheless encouraged and supported me every step of the way: Alexandra McHugh, John Pestana, and Viviane Zicherman. Last, but certainly not least, I acknowledge

the central role of my thesis support group. The regular seminars we held to discuss our dissertation projects and to criticize each other's written work were intellectually stimulating and challenging. These meetings also helped to reduce feelings of intellectual and psychological isolation which are generally associated with the dissertation experience. In appreciation, this dissertation is dedicated to the members of this group.

FOR

Elaine Bander

Eileen Manion

Mimi Morton

Suzanne Peters

Cathy Watson

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CHAPTER I

THE IMMIGRANT BACKGROUND: POST-CONQUEST QUEBEC SOCIETY

> The immigrant is not . . . a colonist or settler who creates a new society and lays down the terms of admission for others. He is rather the bearer of a foreign culture.[1]

For many years nineteenth-century Quebec was described by most scholars as a folk society, a portrayal which has influenced the way scholars have viewed the French-Canadian immigrant experience in New England. Within the last twenty years, however, the folk society interpretation has come under withering attack from certain scholars, primarily historians, who have been looking at economic development and social change in Quebec in the nineteenth-century. Some of the insights of the older interpretation still have validity. Nevertheless, enough revisionist research has been completed to demonstrate that nineteenth-century Quebec, albeit predominantly rural, was a much more dynamic and complex culture than the folk-society model indicates. It is beyond the limits of this study to deal in depth with the present state of historiography. But it is possible to provide first a summary

[1]John Higham, quoted in Thomas Kessner, The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City 1880-1915 (New York, 1977), p. 24.

of the folk society interpretation of Quebec society, and second a discussion of the major findings of newer works. In this way some understanding of the values, needs, and expectations French Canadians possessed when they settled in Lowell will be possible. In this way, too, the historical imperatives and cultural dynamics which influenced the formation of a French-Canadian community in Lowell may be placed in context.

I

According to the folk society model, rural Quebec in the nineteenth century was a traditional peasant society. It consisted of:

> . . . a juxtaposition of families which were very nearly all equal; nearly all engaged in farming; nearly all self-sufficient; but none of which puts any ambition before that of transmitting intact the family property to one of its children, although favouring, within the limits of its resources, the settlement of the other children outside the family home.[2]

The key to the continuity of this peasant economy revolved around the relationship of family to land:

> The farm must be fertile enough and large enough to feed and clothe the family--ideally, enough so to

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[2]Léon Guerin, quoted in Hubert Guindon, "The Social Evolution of Quebec Reconsidered," in French-Canadian Society, vol. 1, ed. by Marcel Rioux and Yves Martin (Toronto, 1964; reprint ed., Ottawa, 1968), p. 145.

> provide money for education or a start elsewhere for the children who do not inherit land. The family, in turn, must be large enough, and possessed of enough skill and solidarity to run the farm and keep it free of burdensome debt. But such a family, by its very size, endangers the farm in every generation. It becomes a function of the family to scatter its members, leaving but one son behind to inherit and to sire the next generation of farmers.[3]

In the course of the nineteenth century available new land became scarce while family size remained fairly stable. Although this meant the eventual demise of the traditional folk society, the end was postponed until the twentieth century because the surplus farm population was able to emigrate to urban, industrializing areas, primarily in New England, but also within Quebec, chiefly in the Montreal area.[4]

The main administrative and social focal point of this fairly resilient self-sufficient family-farm economy was the parish. Within the parish habitants were settled into rangs or rural neighborhoods. A handful of retired farmers, small businessmen, and professionals, along with the local curé, lived in small villages. With-

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[3]Everett C. Hughes, French Canada in Transition (Chicago, 1943; Phoenix Books, 1967), p. 8. See also Horace Miner, St. Denis: A French-Canadian Parish (Chicago, 1939), pp. 79-86; and R. Redfield, "The Folk Society," American Journal of Sociology 42 (1947):292-308.

[4]Everett C. Hughes, "Industry and the Rural System in Quebec," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science 4 (August, 1938):345-46, 349; and Miner, St. Denis, p. 86.

in each parish a chef lieu could be found which grouped local parish communities together; it often contained supra-local institutions such as a bishopric, a hospital, a court or a prison. Some artisans and workers could also be found in these larger towns. Besides the habitants in the rangs and the rentiers and workers in the villages and towns, then, a local bourgeoisie existed at the village level and a more regionally-oriented bourgoisie at the chef lieu or town level--clergy, businessman, and professionals.[5]

The folk society model postulates that social relations within this rural culture were primarily hierarchical, deferential, and paternalistic, especially the relationship between clergy and habitants. In moral matters and in political affairs the authority of the curé or bishop was supreme. The clergy, too, because it controlled education, held the reins of social advancement firmly in its hands. Those few who moved into the small bourgeois group and who were usually the political leaders in their communities, came from the habitant population and were often indebted to a clergyman for this. Nonetheless, despite this rather authoritarian, elitist social structure, the parish was organized administratively in such a manner as to encourage a certain

[5]Guindon, "Social Evolution," pp. 150-54.

amount of democratic levelling. The secular affairs of the parish were run by a board of church members who were popularly elected by their fellow parishioners: the fabrique, consisting of people held in high regard in their community, but not necessarily more prosperous or more socially prominent than their neighbors.[6]

Scholars in the folk society school have not dealt extensively with the issue of ideology. But implicit in their works is the assumption that a traditional peasant way of life resulted in a mentalité which valued the virtues of rural living, loyalty to the family, devotion to the Catholic Church. This assumption, in combination with the general folk society framework, has been influential. It has doubtless contributed, for instance, to the tendency of some scholars to see French Canadians as hostile to the structures and values of modern industrial society.[7]

The main contribution of the folk society studies is that they provide detailed, carefully researched descriptions of a way of life for one segment of the French-Canadian rural population in the nineteenth and early twentieth centures: the self-sufficient habitant family. But

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[6]Miner, St. Denis, pp. 44-62 passim.

[7]See for instance the essays contained in René Durocher and Paul-André Linteau, eds., Le "retard" du Québec et l'infériorité économique des Canadiens Français (Trois-Rivières, 1971).

this approach assumes that Quebec was a traditional, static, primitive, peasant society at a macro- as well as a micro-level. This is not accurate. Newer research findings, especially in the field of economic history, have shown that nineteenth-century Quebec was a modernizing society undergoing rapid and diversified economic development and social change. Through the prism of these more recent studies it is possible to see the major features of this society. This updated overview allows for a more sophisticated understanding of what kind of people French Canadians were when they first stepped off the train in Lowell in the 1870s.

II

The Conquest is the necessary starting point for a re-evaluation of Quebec society. It is a mistake to assume, as proponents of the folk society school have, that New France was the seedbed of the agricultural society of the nineteenth century. Instead, recent scholarship has shown that New France, despite its seigneurial agricultural system, was primarily a commercial society based upon the fur trade. Industries such as shipbuilding and lumbering were important and gave New France a distinct urban flavor despite the peripatetic life of fur-trading coureurs de bois and the existence of a rural habitant population settled along the shores of the St. Lawrence.[8]

[8]At the time of the Conquest one-quarter of the population lived in three towns, Montreal, Quebec City, and Three Rivers. R.J. Ossenberg, "The Conquest Revisited:

At the time of the British victory, this commercial society with its diversified class structure collapsed. Fully one-third of the former leaders of New France--government administrators, entrepreneurs, and to a lesser extent clerics--returned to France, thus "decapitating" the social structure of the defeated colony.[9] Agriculture, of secondary importance before 1763, became the primary economic activity of a society which became quite suddenly much more socially homogeneous.[10]

Before the Conquest political power had been shared in a somewhat contentious fashion among the colonial administrators, seigneurs, Catholic clergy, and entrepreneurs.[11] After the Conquest, the Church, which never held controlling political power in the governing of New France, stepped in quickly to fill the power vacuum which occurred when much of the lay elite departed. Although many of the seigneurs remained, they did not have the confidence of the habitant

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Another Look at Canadian Dualism," Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 4 (1967):216; and Phillippe Garigue, "The French-Canadian Family," in Canadian Dualism, ed. by Wade, p. 189.

[9]Michel Brunet, "Trois dominantes de la pensée Canadienne-Française: l'agriculturalisme, l'anti-étatisme, et la messianisme. Essai d'histoire intellectuelle," Ecrits du Canada français 3 (1957):33-116.

[10]Garigue, "Franch-Canadian Family," p. 189.

[11]Ossenberg, "Conquest Revisited," pp. 206-07.

population. There is much evidence to suggest that the Church did not enjoy the unwavering devotion of the colony's populace either. It was, however, able to take advantage of the British government's need to create a loyal, or at least docile, population in French Canada. The Church played a double game. It professed loyalty to the Crown and thus achieved a certain influence in the colonial administration. It also defended the integrity of the French-Canadian race and insisted on its right for cultural survival. For a defeated and discouraged people who were facing in Michel Brunet's words "une vie diminuée" this nascent nationalistic message of the Church had a strong appeal. With controlled British backing and with the general support of the habitant population, the Church in the post-Conquest era actually achieved greater power and esteem than it had ever possessed in earlier days.[12]

Nevertheless, down to the late 1830s the British government saw the Church as an instrument of colonial policy and kept its power and influence circumscribed. The Church therefore was not given the means to recruit and

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[12] This general view of the Church's history in this period has been drawn from several sources: Cornelius Jaenen, The Role of the Church in New France (Toronto, 1976); Nive Voisine, Histoire de l'eglise catholique au Québec (Montreal, 1971); Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Religion and French-Canadian Mores in the Early Nineteenth Century," Canadian Historical Review 52 (1971):51-91; and Camile Laurin, "Autorité et personalité au Canada Français," Recherches sociographiques 7 (1966):171-82. Michel Brunet speaks of "une vie diminuée" in his article "Trois dominantes de la pensée," p. 37.

train enough clerics to administer adequately to the scattered rural population. A great many habitants lived too far from a parish church to attend mass regularly. This problem became acute in the first decades of the nineteenth century as the population increased much faster than the number of clerics.[13] Even in communities which had a curé, parishioners, in tune with pre-Conquest habits, were frequently far from model Catholics.[14]

By the early nineteenth century a new commercially-minded lay elite composed of notaries, lawyers, doctors, journalists, small merchants and more prosperous farmers had emerged. In 1791 when a representative popular Assembly was established, a political structure came into existence which would someday allow such an elite to acquire political power. This elite, infused with the liberal ideas of the French Revolution and annoyed with the Church's anti-capitalist stand on loans and interests, was strongly anti-clerical. Because the Church maintained up until the Rebellion of 1837 a certain reserve in political affairs,

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[13]Voisine, Histoire de l'eglise, p. 34. The population increased from 60,000 in 1759 to 500,000 in 1837, while the number of priests only increased from 196 to 323 in this period.

[14]Wallot, "Religion and French-Canadian Mores," pp. 82-90. French Canadians were fond of drinking and dancing. They were often less than eager to pay tithes or to serve as churchwardens, an unpaid position. They openly defied or ridiculed parish priests in some communities.

the hostility between it and the lay elite never reached the level of open conflict.[15] Given these limitations before 1837, the Church, according to Jean-Pierre Wallot "was fighting hard simply to subsist outside the control of the state and not to let the countryside become dechristianized. It could not rely on the aristocratic or the professional classes."[16]

Regardless of these handicaps most revisionist historians of the immediate post-Conquest era find Lord Durham's judgement in 1838 on the position of the Catholic Church in French Canada compelling:

> . . . in the general absence of any institution of civil government, the Catholic Church has presented almost the only semblance of stability and organization, and furnished the only effectual support of civilization and order . . . . The religious observances of the French Canadians are so intermingled with all their business, and their amusements, that the priests and the church are with them, more than with any other people, the centre of their little communities.[17]

The other pivotal institution of the immediate post-Conquest era which was forced to change and adapt to new circumstances was the family.[18] It is inaccurate to as-

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[15]Wallot, "Religion and French-Canadian Mores," pp. 53, 73-74; and Voisine, Histoire de l'eglise, pp. 30-32.

[16]Wallot, "Religion and French-Canadian Mores," p. 90.

[17]From Lord Durham's Report, quoted in William Ryan, The Clergy and Economic Growth in Quebec, 1896-1914 (Quebec, 1966), p. 20.

[18]An excellent revisionist overview on the family in this period is Garigue, "Franch-Canadian Family," in Canadian Dualism, ed. by Wade, pp. 181-200. See also Phillippe Garigue, "French-Canadian Kinship and Urban

sume, as most scholars coming out of the folk society school have, that the large stationary farm family has been the only family orientation from the colony's earliest days. Although the family was generally large and closely-knit and rural, the tradition of the coureur de bois and the existence of a considerable urban population were factors which modified the experiences, behavior, and expectations of many families. After 1763 most French Canadians depended on the land for survival. But a significant minority still continued to live in urban areas. A non-rural family orientation, therefore, while it became less prominent, did not disappear completely. It continued to influence the way French Canadians responded to the society of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For instance, Phillippe Garigue, who appreciates that French Canadians of the post-Conquest period inherited a richer, more varied history than the folk society model indicates, comments wryly of their "almost pathological" migratory practices. In the course of the nineteenth century families moved with alacrity from one parish to the next, out to the frontier (the colonization lands), back and forth across the American border, less often out to the Canadian west. He points to the frontier, coureur de bois tradition of New France as a partial explanation. Aware, too, of the essentially non-agrarian orientation of pre-Conquest days, Garigue remarks

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Life," in French-Canadian Society, vol. 1, ed. by Rioux and Martin, pp. 358-72.

perhaps a bit too glibly: "It seems that as soon as they could they left their farms for other places and other occupations." He points out though that regardless of these disorienting influences the French-Canadian family, whether rural or urban, migrating or stationary, had maintained "a strong sense of grouping and integration" from the days of New France down to the mid-twentieth century.[19] In terms of post-Conquest developments it became, along with the Church, a highly valued social institution because it helped French Canadians maintain their ethnic identity through its close-knit, integrated structure and its historical roots in the previous society.[20]

The revisionist picture of the society of eighteenth-century New France and that of the immediate post-Conquest period calls into question many of the assertions of the folk society school. French Canadian society was predominantly rural in the nineteenth century. But this was a new historical experience, and the political and social structures which emerged in this era were influenced by the large economic shift which occurred in French Canada after the Conquest. Moreover, after 1763 French-Canadian society was a subordinate society under the control of a foreign power. To compensate for this subservient position,

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[19] Garigue, "French-Canadian Family," in Canadian Dualism, ed. by Wade, p. 195. All the quotes from Garigue, quoted above, are found on p. 195.

[20] Ibid., pp. 199-200.

French Canadians by degrees allowed the Catholic Church, which put itself forward as the defender of French-Canadian ethnic identity, a greater control over their destinies than had been true in New France. The Church's role as protector of French-Canadian culture became more pronounced after the failure of the anti-clerical, liberal Patriote cause in 1837. Allegiance to the Church in the general populace was accompanied by a continued allegiance to the family as an integrative, unifying force in a society, which was not, despite its rurality, truly "traditional" and "peasant."

III

After the Conquest French-Canadian society lost much of its commercial, urban flavor as most people by necessity turned to the land to earn their livings. By 1800 the vast majority of people lived on farms or in farm communities located along or near the shores of the lower St. Lawrence. This was still true seventy years later: in 1871 eighty per cent of Quebec's population was rural.[21]

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[21]Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada, 1951: Population. General Statistics, I:Table 13. The absolute numbers are provided in the census; the percentage is mine, rounded to the nearest whole number. The urban-rural definition which is used for this date (1871) by the Canadian census: all people living in incorporated cities, towns, and villages are "urban;" all others are "rural." See M. C. Urquhart, ed., Historical Statistics of Canada (Toronto, 1965), p. 5. French Canadians composed 78 per cent of Quebec's total population in 1871. Virtually all of the rest were either Irish (10 per cent), English (6 per cent), and Scottish (4 per cent). Canada. Department of Agriculture. Census of Canada, 1871, 5:20-21. Ethnic origins are given in terms of

According to the folk society view, habitants were mostly engaged in subsistence farming and shared a rough equality in terms of their landholdings and standard of living. Even the nineteenth-century demographic crisis, while it resulted in the scattering of superfluous children away from the family farm, did not seriously threaten the traditional way of life for those who remained on the land.

This static picture obscures important developments which were occurring in Quebec's agricultural sector in the nineteenth century. Habitants did not as a rule practice a totally subsistence agriculture. From the early nineteenth century farmers produced wheat for export to the British market. In good years anywhere from one-fourth to one-half of this crop was sold. This cash crop allowed French Canadians certain luxuries. In addition, habitants raised oats, rye, barley, buckwheat, potatoes, and peas, largely for their own consumption. This semi-subsistence family-farm economy based on wheat characterized Quebec agriculture down to the 1850s. It encouraged the development of rural villages which became centers for collecting, storing, and shipping grains. Milling establishments could

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proportion to every 1000 in the population. I have changed these figures to percentages. Non-French Canadians who lived in rural areas were not usually found in the old seigneurial lands. They were instead concentrated in newer, post-Conquest areas of settlement like the Eastern Townships, as well as in some of the colonization regions which began to be significantly populated only in the latter part of the nineteenth century like the Gaspé peninsula. See Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England," pp. 16-23.

also be found in certain towns.[22]

From the 1820s, the effects of poor farming methods and land scarcity began to undermine the agricultural economy of Quebec. Crop yields decreased and farms decreased in size. Contrary to the folk society thesis that family farms were handed down intact from one generation to the next, fathers were increasingly forced to subdivide their holdings in order to provide some sort of livelihood for their children. There was little other choice. Frontier lands were largely inaccessible at this date because of an inadequate transportation system. Little demand existed within Quebec, except for the lumber trade, for non-farm labor. In this period, too, New England manufacturers were not yet ready to encourage the movement of French Canadians to factory towns like Lowell, Lawrence, Fall River. Other factors took their toll on Quebec's wheat economy: natural disasters, in the form of wheat flies and wheat rust, Great Britain's repeal of its corn laws in 1846, and increasing competition from the Canadian and American mid-west.[23]

By mid-century the wheat-based agricultural system of Quebec was in a state of permanent decline. The slack-

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[22]Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England," pp. 25-68 passim.

[23]Ibid., pp. 35-68 passim.

ening off of wheat production, the habitant's only significant cash crop, meant that semi-subsistence farming was replaced by subsistence farming in some regions.[24] This development, in conjunction with smaller landholdings, made it difficult for many families to escape want: their standard of living deteriorated. In this period, too, a rural, landless day-labor population became conspicuous.[25] The failure of wheat cultivation was partially camouflaged in the 1850s and 1860s because of the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States in 1854 and because of the inflated demand in the United States for Quebec grains and livestock during the Civil War years. But with the ending of Reciprocity and the war in the mid-1860s, the situation for grain-producing Quebec habitants again became critical.[26]

Nevertheless, it was in these years, too, that Quebec agriculture experienced a new start. The increasing size of metropolitan Montreal, and to a lesser extent, Quebec City, created a limited market for foodstuffs, primarily grains and meat, which Quebec farmers, especially those located near these urban areas, could readily provide. But more importantly, between 1850 and 1870 the de-

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[24]Jean Hamelin and Yves Roby, Histoire économique du Québec 1851-1896 (Montreal, 1971), pp. 35-37, 192-94.

[25]Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England," p. 68.

[26]Hamelin and Roby, Histoire économique du Quebec, p. 193.

mand in Britain for dairy products led many Quebec farmers, especially those located in the counties of the Eastern Townships and the Montreal plain, to switch from grain production to dairy farming. This produced a more specialized and mechanized form of agriculture. It helped to create, too, a more commercial attitude among habitants. But while owners of dairy farms could increasingly after 1850 enjoy a decent standard of living, the mechanization involved in dairy farming lessened to an even greater degree the need for farm workers. The old problem in a new guise thus remained: most children upon reaching adulthood had to leave the farm. In some places where grains continued to be grown the demographic pressures of the pre-1850 period became even more pronounced. By the late 1860s, then, many rural people had to look beyond the confines of settled agrarian Quebec if they hoped to escape increasing immiseration.[27]

Before turning to a consideration of how Quebec society attempted to deal with the failure of its agricultural system to provide adequately for its rural population, it is necessary to look at commercial, industrial developments in this era. As already noted, French Canada lost much of its trading character at the time of the Conquest. But what one historian has called "the commercial

[27]See ibid., pp. 192-204, 373, for a discussion of the transition from wheat to dairy farming and the effects it had on the demographic configuration of the Quebec countryside.

empire of the St. Lawrence" did not fade away in 1763, although the importance of the fur trade steadily diminished especially after the War of 1812.[28] Located primarily in Montreal, entrepreneurs who were initially either English or Scottish, developed a new mercantilist system with Great Britain whereby the mother country was supplied with grain and lumber, and later dairy products, in return for manufactured goods.[29]

Especially in the period before the repeal of British grain preferences in 1846, Montreal businessmen were little interested in developing industry. Because Quebec was part of a larger, Atlantic-continental economic system it made little sense for Quebec to attempt to compete with either Britain or the United States in this respect.[30] But small-scale industries based on the processing

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[28]See Donald Creighton, The Empire of the St. Lawrence (Toronto, 1956). This book was originally published in 1937 as The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850.

[29]Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England," pp. 68-69; and Gerald J. J. Tulchinsky, The River Barons: Montreal Businessmen and the Growth of Industry and Transportation 1837-53 (Toronto, 1977), pp. 3-8.

[30]A. Faucher and M. Lamontagne, "History of Industrial Development," in Essays on Contemporary Quebec, ed. by Jean-Charles Falardeau (Quebec, 1953), pp. 34-35. Faucher and Lamontagne argue that Quebec's industrial development "has been mainly a response to change affecting the whole continent." One of the main reasons Quebec could not compete industrially with Britain and the United States in the nineteenth century was because it did not have coal. However, in the twentieth century, when other forms of energy like hydroelectric power could be employed more advantageously, "progress was immediately felt."

needs of an agricultural economy existed such as grist mills, carding and fulling mills, tanneries. These establishments employed a few workers, usually on a part-time basis and were located in rural villages. Lumbering, saw mills, and shipbuilding were also important in the Quebec economy. The lumbering industry complemented Quebec's agricultural system: many habitants and farm laborers were able to find employment in the lumber camps during the winter when farm work was minimal. Quebec City served as the major export port for lumber and was the center of the shipbuilding industry at mid-century.[31]

The lack of industrial development in Quebec was reflected in the size of its few cities. Except for Montreal, Quebec's urban population remained fairly stationary in most towns from the 1840s down to the 1870s. The population of Montreal was 107,225 in 1871, or double what it had been thirty years before. In contrast, Quebec City, the next largest urban center, had a population of 59,690, while only three other towns had populations of more than 5,000 people: Three Rivers (7,570), Lévis (6,691), and Sorel (5,636).[32]

The commercial and manufacturing base of Montreal was broadening significantly in this period, while a fal-

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[31]Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England," pp. 69-71.

[32]Canada, Department of Agriculture, Census of Canada, 1871, 5:32-33.

tering lumber industry was increasingly relegating Quebec City to a subservient position vis-a-vis Montreal. Banking and railroad promotion and construction were the chief concerns of large businessmen in Montreal who had commercial ties with British and American investment houses, while secondary labor-intensive "sweat-shop" industries, primarily in textiles, shoes, and tobacco, were the preoccupation of provincially-based smaller businessmen. To a certain extent, then, Montreal was able to provide an outlet for rural people who could no longer survive on the land.[33]

Most Montreal businessmen of this era were English, Scots, or Americans, but a significant proportion were French Canadians. Recent studies emphasize that the notion that a rural mentalité hindered French-Canadian participation in commercial, industrial affairs is fallacious. French-Canadian businessmen were active in many areas of endeavor which concerned Quebec--some banking houses and railroad promotion schemes, for instance--but were largely cut off from the larger supra-provincial commercial involvements which necessitated contact with English-speaking areas. Some French Canadians owned sweat-shop industries

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[33]Tulchinsky, The River Barons; Paul-Andre Linteau, "Quelques réflexions autour de la bourgeoisie Québecoise, 1850-1914," Revue d'histoire de l'Amerique Francaise 30 (1976-77):55-56; Brian Young, Promotors and Politicians: The North Shore Railways in the History of Quebec 1854-1885 (Toronto, 1968); and Bettina Bradbury, "Montreal's Early Industrialization," Montreal, 1978.

at this time, although most were run by American or British entrepreneurs who had come from the tradesman-artisan class in their respective countries. Again French-Canadian lack of participation in this form of industrial development was not due to any inherent antipathy for such activity but was related to their lack of knowledge of the mechanical processes needed to set up factories.[34]

A recent study of Montreal-Quebec City rivalry for railroad franchises between 1850 and 1885 demonstrates that French-Canadian businessmen in both cities possessed entrepreneurial, commercial values.[35] Politicians and clergymen at the local as well as the provincial level supported industrial development and railroad construction. Farmers were not immune to these influences either. We have already seen that French-Canadian farmers, those who produced wheat or later dairy products for export, had participated in an exchange economy from the early nineteenth century. They could hardly, therefore, have held values solely associated with a "non-commercial people." Historian Brian Young asserts that the construction of the North Shore Railway lines, which connected Montreal with Quebec City and with the Ottawa Valley by the 1870s, contributed further to the creation of commercial, urban, even indus-

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[34]Tulchinsky, The River Barons, pp. 14-19, 204-05.

[35]This is Young, Promotors and Politicians.

trial values among many habitants:

> French-Canadian villagers usually welcomed the railway and discussed it in terms of jobs, the export of local products and the repatriation of their children from the United States. The iron horse may have brought the realization of some of these hopes but at the same time it had urbanizing influences similar to those in other North American communities. Steel, technology, manufactured goods, capital, and English Canadians intruded into north-shore life. Living in Montreal and Quebec City, the provinces's élite imposed on the countryside the urban values of technology, industrialization and resource development.[36]

The thrust and tenor of politics reflected the economic and social changes which were occurring in Quebec society in the second half of the nineteenth century. After defeat of the Patriotes in 1837 the strident, nationalist, anti-clerical urgings of a liberal, largely professional lay elite were forcibly laid to rest. A more conservative French-Canadian nationalism imbued with the values of the ultramontane wing of the Quebec Catholic Church became an important ingredient in the writings and activities of certain journalists and clerics in the years following the Rebellion. But French-Canadian politicians shunned this brand of nationalism for the most part. They were more concerned with establishing a political system which dovetailed with the needs of a commercial-industrial business elite which was not primarily French Canadian. The coming of responsible government in the late 1840s in the wake of the Act of Union in 1841 helped to create the means whereby politicians and businessmen, be they Bri-

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[36]Ibid., p. 144.

tish, American, or French Canadian, could work together amicably. The Act of Confederation in 1867 was not a new departure, but rather a continuation of a process of political conciliation and compromise between the French Canadians and the British and between Quebec and the other newly established provinces.[37]

Neither responsible government nor Confederation dislodged the economically dominant English minority in Quebec. The successful French-Canadian politicians in the years surrounding Union and Confederation accepted this reality. Men like Louis La Fontaine and Georges Etienne Cartier chose to work in partnership with English politicians.

The major problem facing Quebec politicians in the second half of the nineteenth century was the inability of Quebec's agricultural system to support its rural population.[38] As we have already seen, Montreal was the only

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[37]See Jacques Monet, The Last Cannon Shot: A Study of French-Canadian Nationalism (Toronto, 1969), pp. 4-6, 398-99; and Young, Promotors and Politicians, p. 4. For the importance of regionalism as a factor in Quebec politics see Ronald Rudin, "Regional Complexity and Political Behaviour in a Quebec County, 1867-1886," Histoire Sociale/ Social History 9 (May, 1976):92-110.

[38]The chief economic aims of the first Quebec parliament after Confederation were to encourage colonization, railroad development, and dairy farming. Marcel Hamelin. Les premières années du parlimentarisme Québecois 1867-1878 (Quebec City, 1974), pp. 342-43. This point is also made in Robert Lahaise, et al., Economie Québécoise (Montreal, 1970), p. 137.

center of significant industrialization in this period. Many French Canadians moved from the land to Montreal. But, by necessity, many more in the post Civil War period migrated across the border at a staggering rate to the industrializing towns of southern New England: by 1900 one in four French Quebecers was living in New England.[39]

In order to halt or at least moderate the pace of this virtual diaspora, the Quebec government, with the strong support of the Catholic Church, set about establishing colonization societies and promoting railroads into the frontier regions. The government also in 1887 created a Ministry of Agriculture and Colonization and allotted free land to families with twelve or more children. Catholic clergymen served as missionaries in newly established colonization parishes. But despite these efforts, only 45,000 people, largely in areas near the lower St. Lawrence Valley like the Gatineau, the Eastern Townships, or St.

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[39]This is a rough estimate only. The French population of Quebec in 1901 was about 1,300,000. The total number of persons of French-Canadian stock in the United States in 1900 was about 850,000. If all persons of French-Canadian stock living in the United States in 1900 had resided in Quebec at this time the population of the province would have been 2,150,000. The number of persons of French-Canadian stock living in New England in 1900, 575,000, is roughly 27 per cent of this 2,150,000; hence, the estimate that one in every four French Quebecers lived in New England in 1900. Canada, Department of Agriculture, Census of Canada, 1901: Population, 1:352. Leon E. Truesdell, The Canadian Born in the United States (New Haven, Connecticut, 1943), p. 77.

Jerome in the Laurentians, had been colonized by 1900.[40] In contrast, about 575,000 people of French-Canadian stock lived in New England in 1900.[41]

The French-Canadian political and professional elite as well as the Catholic clergy at first railed bitterly against the depopulating of the countryside. French Canadians who left Quebec were disloyal, degraded people. George Etienne Cartier purportedly remarked rather savagely at one point: "Let them go. It is the rabble who are departing."[42] But there was little anyone could do to plug the hole in the dike. Indeed, provincial leaders could do even less when French Canadians migrated in droves back across the border during the periodic depressions which hit late-nineteenth century Canadian society with at least as much severity as they did American society.[43]

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[40]Lahaise, et al., Economie Québécoise, pp. 122-23.

[41]Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England," p. 2. "French-Canadian stock" in the United States census designates persons born in Canada whose mother tongue is French as well as persons not born in Canada who nonetheless report one or both parents as Canadian-born with French as the mother tongue.

[42]Mason Wade, "The French Parish and Survivance in Nineteenth Century New England," Catholic Historical Review 36 (July, 1950):163-74 passim. Cartier's statement is cited in Alexandre Bélisle, Histoire de la presse Franco-Américaine et des Canadiens Français aux Etats-Unis (Worcester, Massachusetts, 1911), p. 14.

[43]Hamelin and Roby, Histoire économique du Québec, p. 70.

Eventually French-Canadian political and religious leaders came to see the migration of French Canadians down to New England as unavoidable. In fact, already by the late 1860s a rationalization for this phenomenon was being articulated by Mgrs. Ignace Bourget and Louis-François Laflèche, the leaders of the ultramontane wing of the Quebec Catholic Church. In line with the traditional stance of the Church from the days of the Conquest, Bourget and Laflèche insisted that French Canadians constituted a separate ethnic group whose cultural integrity was based on religion and language. They also added at this time, however, the idea that movement across a national border did not threaten French-Canadian cultural identity. French Canadians carried their faith and language with them wherever they went. Moreover, French Canadians now had a special mission to fulfill: to bring Protestant New England into the Catholic fold.[44] Increasingly, from the late 1860s, the Quebec Catholic hierarchy sponsored missionary work in New England. Largely because of this new attitude eighty-six French-speaking parishes were established in New England between 1868 and 1891.[45]

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[44]Mason Wade, The French Canadians 1790-1967, vol. 1, rev. ed. (Toronto, 1968), p. 346; and Hamelin and Roby, Histoire économique du Québec, p. 70.

[45]Wade, "The French Parish and Survivance," p. 176 passim. See also Pierre Savard, "Relations Between French Canadian and American Catholics in the Last Third of the Nineteenth Century," Culture (March, 1970):24-39.

It is important to note here that the Catholic Church became extremely powerful--politically, economically, and socially--in Quebec in the last half of the nineteenth century. The Patriotes' defeat in 1837 disgraced Quebec's burgeoning French-Canadian lay elite while it enhanced the power and prestige of the Church. Other critical factors which helped to cement the Church's authority in Quebec society were its control over education, its involvement in agricultural reform societies, colonization, and railroad promotion, as well as its ability to absorb conservative, ultramontane refugee clergy from Europe at mid-century. A religious revival also spread through Quebec in the 1840s which some historians argue helped to create a population which was more pious, temperate, and respectful and obedient to authority than was the case in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[46]

The institution of the family continued to function as an integrative force in Quebec society in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Research indicates that strong family and kinship ties and allegiances helped French Canadians cope with the material and emotional dislocations created in the lives of people who experienced some form of migration: for instance, from older rural communities to colonization lands, from farms to towns or

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[46]See Voisine, Histoire de l'eglise catholique au Québec, chapter 3, "Une eglise de plus en plus romaine (1840-1896)," pp. 39-53; and Monet, The Last Canon Shot, pp. 394-95.

cities in Quebec, or from rural or urban areas within Quebec to industrial towns in New England.[47]

IV

French Canada in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was not a traditional folk society. Its predominantly French-Canadian population was primarily engaged in agriculture, but this agriculture before mid-century was based on a semi-subsistence system; it only came into being as the primary way of life for most people after the Conquest of 1763. The assertion of the folk society school that social organization in the countryside centered around parish, rang, and family has been substantiated in revisionist literature. But although the family was, as the folk society model postulates, the basic unit of production, land was not passed down intact from one generation to the next in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially after the 1820s. Instead land was increasingly subdivided so that those who inherited could not always earn a decent living for themselves and their families. Rural people did not always live generation after generation on the same land or even in the same communities.

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[47]Garigue, "French-Canadian Family," pp. 189-200; Garigue, "Kinship and Urban Life," in French-Canadian Society, vol. 1, ed. by Rioux and Martin, pp. 358-72; and Marcel Rioux, "Kinship Recognition and Urbanization in French Canada," in French-Canadian Society, vol. 1, ed. by Rioux and Martin, pp. 372-85.

Geographic mobility from one agricultural county to the next, to and from colonization lands, into the towns and cities within Quebec, and back and forth across the border was frequent.

Despite the rural nature of Quebec society the commercial and industrial developments of the nineteenth century were forces which modified social relations, class structures, and values. Nineteenth-century Quebec can hardly be described as non-commercial or anti-modern. There is even reason to believe that French Canadians--whether they were farmers, mechanics, laborers, politicians, businessmen, professionals or priests--had an entrepreneurial or at least an adventurous streak in their makeups. Because of structural changes in the Quebec economy geographic mobility and occupational fluidity were common experiences for many French Canadians. But pioneering was not a popular option in the latter part of the nineteenth century. When faced with a choice between living the far from comfortable life of an immigrant in a foreign land or becoming subsistence farmers on remote colonization land, most chose the former option.

The Catholic Church played a very important role in French-Canadian society in the nineteenth century. It is difficult to guage the power it held over people's lives but given the scholarship of such people as Jean-Pierre Wallot it seems doubtful that the preachments and leaders

of the Church were ever as uncritically accepted by the ordinary French Canadian as is suggested in the folk society model. Nevertheless it is likely that the Church did condition the French-Canadian collective psyche in some fundamental ways.

The folk society thesis' stress on the centrality of the family in French Canada has stood up under revisionist scrutiny. Newer studies which appreciate in a way which folk society studies have not the large degree of social change which Quebec society experienced in the nineteenth century emphasize the malleability and adaptability of the French-Canadian family in new circumstances and environments.

Unfortunately it is not possible to discover which areas of Quebec provided Lowell with its French-Canadian population in the 1870s. But given the state of Quebec agriculture it is probable that immigrants came from both the declining grain-producing areas in the St. Lawrence Valley counties above Montreal and the specializing-mechanizing dairy farming counties of the Eastern Townships and the Montreal plain. Neither subsistence farming nor market-oriented specialized farming could absorb all the children of habitant parents. Decline and progress in Quebec agriculture contributed to the demographic crisis of the Quebec countryside in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It is also probable that some French Canadians coming

to Lowell were from rural villages. In these communities they might have been craftsmen or workers in small agricultural processing industries. Some, too, had probably spent time in one of the two metropolitan areas of Quebec, Montreal or Quebec City, or in one of several smaller towns with populations between 3,000 and 8,000 in 1871.[48] In these urban areas Lowell French Canadians could have gained experience before emigrating in any number of occupations--as artisans, day laborers, construction workers, operatives in lumber mills, textile, shoe or tobacco factories. Women and children who had lived in Montreal might very well have worked in the sweat-shop trades.[49]

These differences in background should not camouflage the common heritage which all French Canadians shared:

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[48]Towns with populations between 3,000 and 8,000 in 1871:

Three Rivers	7,570
Lévis	6,691
Sorel	5,636
Sherbrooke	4,432
Hull	3,800

Hamelin and Roby, Histoire économique du Québec, p. 292.

[49]Bettina Bradbury, "The Family Economy and Work in an Industrializing City, Montreal, 1871," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, June, 1979; Suzanne Cross, "The Neglected Majority: The Changing Role of Women in 19th Century Montreal," in The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History, ed. by Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice (Toronto, 1977):66-86; and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, "One Hundred and Two Muffled Voices: Canada's Industrial Women in the 1880s," Atlantis 3 (Fall, 1977): 67-82.

they were a people who had been conquered by a foreign power in the previous century. After the Conquest French-Canadian and British elite groups worked out a political *modus vivendi* which resulted in the development of a plural society. French Canadians and English people were brought together through participation in a common political system and through economic interdependence, but they kept their separate ethnic identities through institutional dualism and the retention of their respective languages.[50]

From 1763 down through the nineteenth century French Canadians approached British culture cautiously, accepting over time only ways of behaving and thinking which were consistent with their own historical and contemporary needs. It is possible, too, the French Canadians became more dependent after the Conquest on institutions and values of an earlier era than they would have been if the English had not become their masters in 1763. Because they felt threatened and insecure after their defeat by the British, French Canadians evinced at times a tendency to revert or to regress to "the fundamental values of earlier

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[50]Ossenberg, "Conquest Revisited," pp. 201-17. Ossenberg provides some useful insights into the nature of Canadian pluralism or "dualism." See especially pp. 201-06 for a discussion of the major characteristics of pluralistic societies.

days."[51] A commitment to traditional values, for instance, contributed something to the development of a conservative ultramontane Catholic strain in nineteenth-century French-Canadian nationalist ideology.

This propensity to look towards the past for guidance might also provide some insights into the nature of French-Canadian institutional and ideological adjustment to life in Lowell in the 1870s. French Canadians who left Quebec to settle in Lowell were facing a situation analagous in some ways to the Conquest experience. They were taking up residence in a society where they could not expect to be treated as equals. They could also not expect an English-speaking, largely Protestant American population to look kindly upon their commitment to the French language, the Catholic Church, and French-Canadian ethnic identity. French Canadians arriving in Lowell, in fact, had more reason to feel threatened and insecure than their compatriots

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[51] Ibid., p. 205. Ossenberg quoting George M. Foster, Traditional Culture and the Impact of Technological Change (New York, 1962), p. 41. The complete quote from Foster, as presented by Ossenberg is that in plural societies:

> ". . . the dominated group feels that its own culture is threatened, but it has nothing to substitute; feelings of insecurity result and several forms (of reaction) may occur, but the common element is a partial or complete rejection of the culture of the foreigner and an attempt to return to . . . the fundamental values of earlier days."

See also Laurin, "Autorité et personalité," pp. 171-82, who makes Foster's point along more rigorous psychoanalytic lines.

who remained behind. The Conquest experience with its repercussions upon French-Canadian society had receded somewhat. The French-Canadian immigrant in Lowell had a whole new world to face in the present.

CHAPTER II

THE LOWELL CONTEXT

> A city is many things: it is a cultural focus, a social resort, a political center, but before all--though not above all--it is a place where people earn a living. This priority is especially striking in young cities where a vigorous social and cultural life must await the establishment of a stable economic structure.[1]

I

In 1822 the future city of Lowell was a sleepy little farming village--East Chelmsford--nestled among foothills along the banks of the Merrimack River in northeastern Massachusetts. Within the space of four years East Chelmsford was transformed into a thriving industrial boom town with a population of 2500. It was incorporated as the town of Lowell in 1826.[2] A group of merchant-manufacturers from Salem and Boston, who came to be known as the Boston Associates, were responsible for Lowell's development in these years. At first they had no intention of founding a city. They merely wished to establish

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[1]Richard C. Wade, The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830 (Cambridge, 1959), p. 39.

[2]Joseph W. Lipchitz, "The Golden Age," in Cotton was King: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts, ed. by Arthur L. Eno, Jr. (Lowell, 1976), p. 91.

a second center for textile production, the first having been set up by them in near-by Waltham in 1813.[3]

Following a pattern they had already instituted in Waltham, but expanding their operations considerably, the Boston Associates in 1822 bought up a large tract of land in East Chelmsford.[4] At the same time they purchased a local canal company, the Locks and Canals on the Merrimack. Under the aegis of this company the Associates began selling land, furnishing water power, constructing machinery, mills, and boarding houses. By 1826 two textile corporations were in operation. The mills combined under one roof all processes for cotton cloth production. Since male labor was needed in agriculture, the corporations recruited young unmarried farm girls from the sur-

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[3]Nathan Appleton, Origin of Lowell (Lowell, 1858); John Coolidge, Mill and Mansion: A Study of Architecture and Society in Lowell, Massachusetts 1820-1865 (New York, 1942), pp. 18-27; and Howard M. Gitelman, "The Waltham System and the Coming of the Irish," Labor History 8 (1967):227-53.

[4]The general history of Lowell's economic development in these years has been reviewed in my Masters thesis. See Frances Early Piva, "An Idyl Confronted: The New England Mill Girls and the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association" (Masters thesis, Concordia University, 1973), pp. 4-24. The information on Lowell and its early labor system is summarized from my thesis. A standard source on this topic is Hannah Josephson, The Golden Threads: New England's Mill Girls and Magnates (New York, 1949; reprint ed., New York, 1967). See also Thomas Dublin, "Women, Work, and the Family: Female Operatives in the Lowell Mills, 1830-1860," Feminist Studies 3 (Fall, 1975):30-79; and John Kasson, "The Factory as Republican Community: The Early History of Lowell, Massachusetts," paper presented at the American Studies Convention, October 19, 1973.

rounding countryside to work in the mills.[5] Boarding houses were constructed to accommodate these women. In order to allay the fears of New England parents who were leary of allowing their daughters to leave their homes to work in the Lowell mills, boarding house "mothers," usually respectable widows, were put in charge of the residences. Strict corporation regulations relating to behavior in the mills and boarding houses further insured that the atmosphere of Lowell would be considered morally acceptable to the parents of prospective female mill employees.

Farm girls were not the only people who came to Lowell in these early years. A small number of male English and Scottish textile workers arrived to undertake some of the heavier jobs in the mills which often also required a high level of skill.[6] In the early 1830s Irish immigrants began settling in Lowell in small numbers. These people, mainly single men or husbands and fathers whose families were still in Ireland, did not work in the mills but were employed as day laborers to build canals, roads,

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[5]The introduction of the power loom into the production of cotton cloth at this time made it possible for women to use machinery which previously only men had been physically strong enough to handle. See Nathan Appleton, The Introduction of the Power Loom (Lowell, 1858).

[6]Frederick W. Coburn, History of Lowell and its People, vol. 1 (New York, 1920), pp. 169-70; and Samuel Adams Drake, History of Middlesex County, vol. 2 (Boston, 1880), pp. 79-83.

mills, and residences.[7] As the population working in and around the mills grew, artisans--machinists, blacksmiths, house builders, carpenters, dyers, carriage and harness makers, tool makers, workers in wood and iron--came to Lowell and set up small independent businesses.[8] People engaged in retail trades, especially in grocery and provisions and dry goods, as well as professionals--physicians, lawyers, notaries, journalists--were also drawn to Lowell.

By 1836, only ten years after its founding, Lowell's population had jumped to 18,000.[9] In this year Lowell became a city, the third, after Boston and Salem, to be incorporated by the Massachusetts legislature.[10] Lowell had become what its founders had never intended it to be: a municipality with diversifying economic, social, and political interests. The phase of Lowell's history

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[7]"Letter from John F. McEvoy," in Proceedings of the Semi-Centennial Celebration of the Incorporation of the Town of Lowell, March 1, 1876 (Lowell, 1876), p. 36; George F. O'Dwyer, The Irish Catholic Genesis of Lowell, rev. ed. (Lowell, 1920), pp. 7-8; and Coburn, History of Lowell, vol. 1, pp. 170-71.

[8]Charles Cowley, Illustrated History of Lowell, rev. ed. (Boston, 1868), pp. 61-62.

[9]Lipchitz, "Golden Age," in Cotton Was King, ed. by Eno, p. 95.

[10]Ibid.

as a carefully planned and paternalistically controlled creation of the Boston Associates was drawing to a close.

Even though corporation hegemony over Lowell's development lessened in the next decades, corporation dividends did not: the corporations--eleven existed by 1845--averaged a steady seven per cent per annum.[11] Industries not run by the Associates, like wadding and batting mills, machine shops, dye houses, screw-bolt factories, bobbin and shuttle factories, bedstead factories, a grist mill, a brewery, patent medicine manufacturies, and lumber mills made their appearance, too.[12] Railroad facilities to and from Lowell were ample by this era; the Boston and Lowell Railroad and the Lowell and Salem Railroad connected Lowell to the coast, and the Stony Brook Railroad linked the city to points west.[13] These developments, in conjunction with the city's main industry, textiles, contributed to Lowell's boom-town quality. They also played a part in swelling the city's population which was 32,000 by 1845, almost double that of 1836.[14]

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[11]Carolyn F. Ware, Early New England Cotton Manufactures: A Study in Industrial Beginnings (New York, 1931; reprint ed., New York, 1966), p. 152.

[12]Cowley, History of Lowell, pp. 62-64; and Coburn, History of Lowell, vol. 1, pp. 353-55.

[13]Coburn, History of Lowell, vol. 1, p. 243.

[14]Lipchitz, "Golden Age," in Cotton Was King, ed. by Eno, p. 101.

It was in these years that Lowell achieved world-wide fame as a model progressive factory town. Well-known foreign visitors like Charles Dickens as well as many famous Americans like Andrew Jackson came away from Lowell with unstinting praise on their lips. These visitors were struck by the startling contrast of work and life in Lowell for mill operatives when compared with European textile towns like Manchester, England. The corporation policy of hiring farm girls who worked only a few years in the factories before returning to their farm communities, usually to marry, meant that no permanent proletariat was developing. Visitors rated working and living conditions superior to those in European manufacturing centers.[15]

In 1836, Michel Chevalier, a French political scientist who was studying American industry, visited Lowell. He, like many others of the era, marvelled at the mill workers:

> Lowell, with its steeple-crowned factories, resembles a Spanish town with its convents; but with this difference, that in Lowell, you meet no rags nor Madonnas, and that the nuns in Lowell, instead of working sacred hearts, spin and weave cotton. Lowell is not amusing, but it is neat and decent, peaceable and sage. Will it always be so? Will it be so long?[16]

Another visitor, the Reverend William Scoresby, of Brad-

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[15]Piva, "Idyl Confronted," pp. 26-30.

[16]Michel Chevalier, Society, Manners and Politics in the United States (Boston, 1839), p. 142.

ford, England, described Lowell's pastoral physical appearance in glowing terms:

> Nothing is discoloured, neither houses nor mills nor trees--the red brick factories and boarding houses, and the other edifices of wood painted in light colours, look as fresh as if just finished; the streets--dusty enough, indeed, . . . were not yet black like ours; and the sky, unshrouded by smoke or cloud, was brillant and clear--the sun darting down its unobstructed rays with dazzling and scorching power . . . the trees and plants . . . were fresh and flourishing . . . Lowell, large as it has grown, it is yet rural in its appearance, and notwithstanding its being a city of factories, is yet fresh and cleanly.[17]

Less than thirty years later Lowell's mill force and physical characteristics had altered drastically. In 1861 Prince Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte of France visited Lowell upon Chevalier's suggestion. But the "nuns" of industry Chevalier had so admired had departed:

> More than a quarter of a century had elapsed since Chevalier's visit; the New England girls on whom he then gazed so admiringly, had passed away; and their places were now filled by a motley crowd of American, English, Scotch, Irish, Dutch and French Canadians, who were hardly likely to arouse the exquisite poetic sentiment which Chevalier felt for the factory girls.[18]

The neat, attractive city of the 1830s and 1840s, while still fairly "peaceable" and "sage," was no longer "fresh and cleanly." One had to travel to the outlying suburbs of Lowell to find a bucolic atmosphere. Central Lowell had become a typical American industrial city--grimy and drab with huge prison-like mill complexes and mushrooming

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[17]William Scoresby, American Factories and their Female Operatives (London, 1845), pp. 11-12.

[18]Cowley, History of Lowell, p. 200.

tenement slum neighborhoods.[19] An anecdote, probably from the 1880s, underscores Lowell's physical degeneration. A Polish immigrant remembered being told by a train conductor that he had reached his destination, Lowell. The immigrant, after a glance through the train window, argued with the conductor, convinced that the ugly, dirty city he saw from the train could not be Lowell. It was not at all what he had expected to find.[20]

This fairly abrupt change in Lowell's character was largely due to a new textile corporation labor policy which began in the 1830s, but only reached fruition in the mid-1840s.[21] Beginning in the 1830s the corporations, in order to keep profits high, began cutting wages and speeding up machine processes. Mild, ineffectual protests were organized by the mill workers in the 1830s. In the 1840s militant, organized resistance to wage cuts and speed-ups occurred. A group of determined Lowell women mill operatives formed a labor reform association in 1845. This organization worked within the New England Labor Reform Association in a petition campaign to improve factory con-

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[19]Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, pp. 102-03.

[20]Peter F. Blewett, "The New People: An Introduction to the Ethnic History of Lowell," in Cotton Was King, ed. by Eno, p. 208.

[21]This section on the corporation labor policy from the 1830s and worker response to it is based on Piva, "Idyl Confronted," pp. 39-82. See also Thomas Dublin, "Women, Work, and Protest in the Early Lowell Mills: 'The Oppressing Hand of Avarice would Enslave Us,'" Labor History 16 (1975):99-117.

ditions, raise wages, and institute a ten-hour day.[22] This workers' movement was, however, no match for the corporations. The Massachusetts legislature turned a deaf ear on the mill workers' demands. By 1847 the mill operatives admitted defeat. By 1850 many of the famous factory girls had left Lowell, never to return. Those who remained were generally "poverty's daughters."[23] The mills, however, did not lack hands to mind the spindles and looms: by this time many Irish families, in the wake of the devastating potato famine in Ireland, had migrated to Lowell. They accepted the more rigorous work rhythm and low wages. In 1850 and again in 1860 about one half of the mill operatives were Irish, mainly women and a few children; by 1870 as we shall see later many French Canadians had joined the Irish and poorer native Americans in the mills.[24]

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[22]Mills ran anywhere from eleven to fourteen hours per day, depending on the season. A seventy-five hour work week was the norm. Piva, "Idyl Confronted," pp. 31-32, 68.

[23]"Poverty's daughters" was a phrase used by a mill worker to describe the majority of her sister workers in the 1840s. Voice of Industry (Fitchburg), July 3, 1845.

[24]Josephson, Golden Threads, p. 288; and Thomas Dublin, "Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1974), pp. 150, 167, 170. Dublin found that 60 per cent of the operatives in the Hamilton Mills were foreigners in 1860; the Irish comprised 47 per cent of the operatives in the Hamilton mill force. In that year 6 per cent of the Hamilton workers were children under age 15; usually they were employed as lappers, doffers, and back and front boys in the mule-spinning process, all relatively light tasks.

From the 1830s Lowell had been a showcase for the idea that in America industrialization could proceed along a humane, benevolent path which would benefit all citizens, even low-skilled factory operatives. In 1868, Charles Cowley, Lowell's foremost local historian, set the record straight. He pointedly and indignantly remarked that in 1861 nine Lowell textile corporations "unanimously, in cold blood, dismissed ten thousand operatives, penniless, into the streets." When the corporations reopened after the war, these workers "could no more be recalled than the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel."[25] The golden era of Lowell as a model factory town, as Cowley's statement attests, had long since past. But the drama of Lowell as a major center for textile production was not yet played out. In this period only Fall River, Massachusetts, exceeded Lowell in textile production.[26]

Although many of the old pre-war workers were gone from Lowell forever, new working-class people flocked into the city in search of employment when the mills reopened in 1865. Lowell's population had decreased from 36,000 in 1860 to 31,000 in 1865; with the reopening of the mills it rose again--by almost twenty-five per cent

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[25]Cowley, History of Lowell, pp. 60-61.

[26]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Fourth Annual Report, 1873, p. 280.

in five years--to 41,000 in 1870.[27] In 1870 Lowell was still predominantly a Yankee town: sixty-five per cent of the people were native Americans. The rest were immigrants, who, except for the French Canadians, were largely English-speaking. Twenty-two per cent of the total population was Irish, four per cent was English, and three per cent was from Scotland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, and "other." Six per cent of Lowell's citizenry was Canadian, in large measure French Canadian.[28]

The Ministry-at-Large of Lowell, a non-denominational charity organization, expressed dismay at the sudden leap in the city's population. In 1866 its annual report noted with consternation that in the past two years over 10,000 persons, many of whom were "utterly destitute," had entered Lowell. Many of the persons arriving were

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[27]The exact figures for these years are 1860, 36,827; 1865, 30,990; 1870, 40,928. Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Census of Massachusetts, 1875: Population and Social Statistics, 1:743. In 1875 Lowell's population was 49,688; the census stated that the addition of 10,000 people in Lowell in the ten-year period between 1865 and 1875 was "from general causes, but especially from increased manufacturing." Census of Massachusetts, 1875, 1:766. I analyze Lowell's occupational structure in chapter 4.

[28]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Fourth Annual Report, 1873, pp. 281-82. The percentages are mine, computed from the absolute numbers for each ethnic group as provided in the United States census. United States, Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: The Statistics of the Population of the United States, 1:386-87. The United States census did not make a distinction in 1870 between English and French Canadians. I discuss my methodology

"wretchedly poor" working-class people from other New England cities who were attempting to "better their condition."[29] A significant portion of the newcomers were French Canadians. The Ministry described these immigrants in a highly unflattering manner:

> They were nearly all Catholic, do not speak English, are in a low, sensual condition of life, and are less disposed than others to improve themselves. They are not so accessible to our influence. Not mingling freely with society, they do not catch the dominant spirit.[30]

Whether these Protestant clergymen of Lowell liked it or not, the influx of French Canadians into their city at this time was not a temporary phenomenon. In 1865 only a handful of French Canadians, perhaps 100, resided in Lowell.[31] By 1868 the number was around 1200.[32] A brief two years later, in 1870, the approximate number of French Canadians living in Lowell was 2000, five per cent of the Lowell population of 41,000.[33] And in 1873 it looked as if French Canadians, 4000 of whom now resided in Lowell, were, along with other working-class people, contributing to the formation of a permanent factory pro-

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for estimating Lowell's French-Canadian population in Chapter 3.

[29] Twenty-second Annual Report of the Ministry-at-Large in Lowell (Lowell, 1867), p. 4

[30] Ibid., p. 5.

[31] Richard Santerre, Un peuple et son rêve: Saint-Jean Baptiste de Lowell, Massachusetts, 1868-1968 (Manchester, New Hampshire, forth-coming), p. 6.

[32] Ibid., p. 18.

[33] See chapter 3. This is a high estimate. The low estimate is 1300.

letariat. In that year Cowley stated with regret:

> We are gradually creating--what the founders of Lowell never looked for--a permanent body of factory employés, composed in part of American stock, but more largely of Irish and French Canadian elements, with English, Scotch, and German blood commingled. What this fact forebodes I will not venture to conjecture. But perhaps we are to have here a class of resident laborers, similar to that of the manufacturing cities of Europe.[34]

II

The factory proletariat which Cowley alluded to lived in a city which also by the 1870s possessed a self-conscious, prosperous, Republican, native-American middle class consisting of resident corporation executives, local manufacturers and merchants, ministers, lawyers, doctors, and editors. This middle class first came to prominence in the 1830s, especially after Lowell was incorporated as a city in 1836.[35] Strong tensions initially existed within this class: corporate spokesmen, in the interests of largely non-resident stockholders, frequently attempted to foil the plans of Lowell professional and business people to increase the power and scope and budget of the municipal government.[36] Nevertheless,

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[34]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Fourth Annual Report, 1873, pp. 281-82. The 4000 figure is an estimate found in this report which Charles Cowley wrote for the bureau on the condition of the working class in Lowell.

[35]Thomas Bender, Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America (Lexington, Kentucky, 1975); pp. 101-02; and Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, pp. 73-74.

[36]Lipchitz, "Golden Age," in Cotton Was King,

corporate and middle-class political interests dovetailed in their loyalty to the Whig, and later Republican Parties.[37] Eventually, too, wealthier Lowellians began buying corporate stocks.[38] Over time the corporations modified their priorities and established a certain rapport with civic-minded town leaders.

Corporate spokesmen and other middle-class people learned to work together to develop a municipal government whose power was progressively widened through charter changes to allow for centralized planning and the establishment of additional institutions as they were needed.[39] Police, fire, school, health, transportation, and vital statistics departments existed by mid-century. The elected officials--mayor, Board of Aldermen, and Common Council--were almost invariably native Americans until the 1880s.[40] The various municipal departments were also pri-

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ed. by Eno, pp. 93-101; and Mary H. Blewett, "The Mills and the Multitudes: A Political History," in Cotton Was King, ed. by Eno, pp. 161-67.

[37]Mary H. Blewett, "Mills and Multitudes," in Cotton Was King, ed. by Eno, pp. 161-67.

[38]Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, pp. 73-74.

[39]Mary H. Blewett, "Mills and Multitudes," in Cotton Was King, ed. by Eno, pp. 166-78.

[40]Ibid.

marily staffed with native Americans in these years.[41]

Lowell had by 1870 become an established urban community with a stable economic base and a middle-class leadership group committed to the city's further development. Socially and culturally Lowell had rounded out and matured also. In 1870 Lowell had 19 Protestant Churches, 5 Catholic Churches, several public libraries, and 2 town halls (Mechanics Hall and Huntington Hall).[42] Many social service and cultural associations also existed. Lowell possessed 2 parks (North and South Commons) as well as a fair ground where agricultural exhibitions were regularly held. Two picnic areas--Willow Dale and Tyng's Island--were located on the outskirts of town and were accessible to city dwellers via a horse-car trolley line. Lowell even had its own baseball team called the Clippers which played teams from as far away as Cincinnati.[43]

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[41]Lowell City Directories and Lowell City Documents list elected officials and civil servants respectively. In 1869 the Lowell police force was still predominantly native American. Of the 35 men in the force, 31 were American (only 1 was not from New England), 2 were Canadian (with English names), and 2 were Irish. Lowell Daily Citizen and News, January 16, 1869.

[42]Lowell City Directory, 1870, pp. 325-26. In 1875 Lowell had 22 libraries, 6 secular (2 public, state, city; 2 public and private school; 1 association; 1 private circulating) and 14 religious (4 church; 11 sunday school; 1 association). One of the 22 was French-Canadian, "St. Joseph's French S. S. Library," another was Irish, "St. Patrick's S. S. Library." Census of Massachusetts, 1875, 1:674, 715.

[43]Coburn, History of Lowell, vol. 1, pp. 224-25,

Temperance appears to have been the most popular cause in Lowell in the 1860s and 1870s. Societies flourished. It was not uncommon to read in the daily newspaper of a temperance rally having taken place in Huntington Hall where 250 people had "signed the pledge" while "Young Crusaders" sang songs like "Work for Jesus."[44] Native Americans were not the only temperance enthusiasts. The Irish, too, had a temperance society.[45] Visiting lecturers, especially those involved in reform causes like temperance, usually enjoyed full audiences in Lowell. In 1869 and 1870 such well-known personages as Horace Greeley and Lucy Stone came to speak on the woman question; Wendell Philips lectured one evening on temperance, the woman question, and against "the mob of 'men of property and standing;'" Julia Ward Howe spoke on another occasion of "The Ethics of Culture."[46]

Glancing through the pages of the daily newspaper in any week in this period reveals a population which was intensely socially active, at least that portion of the population with the time and energy after work or on Sundays for such varied events as temperance rallies, lyceum

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232, 384-87; and Lowell Daily Citizen and News, 1868-1870 passim.

[44] Lowell Daily Citizen and News, April 18, 1870.

[45] Ibid., December 7, 1868; and January 25,1869.

[46] Ibid., April 2, 1869; October 26, 1870; February 3, 1870; April 13, 1870.

lectures, church socials, picnics, baseball games. In 1882 Lowell reported having 95 clubs, societies, and associations, about double the number to be found in factory towns like Fall River and Lawrence.[47]

It is difficult to ascertain to what extent "the plain people" of Lowell participated in these social and cultural activities, although newspaper descriptions of many events leave the impression that citizen involvement was substantial. It is even more difficult to determine what kinds of ideas and expectations ordinary people had about society and their place and role within it at this time since documents recording their impressions are sparce. It is easier to get a sense of the values and

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[47]Fall River reported 42, Lawrence 57. Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 270. The breakdown of societies in these cities reveals that Lowell had more artistic-educational associations than either Fall River or Lawrence.

Societies	Fall River	Lowell	Lawrence
Military	2	8	5
Social	3	6	4
Charitable	8	10	5
Religious	1	4	1
Temperance	14	12	5
Masonic	6	11	9
Odd Fellows	3	14	5
Other secret societies	5	16	22
Musical	-	2	1
Art	-	1	-
Literary	-	9	-
Educational	-	2	-
Total	42	95	57

attitudes of Lowell's vocal, articulate middle-class leaders whose ideas have in many instances been preserved for posterity.

The social values of Lowell's town leaders in this era were grounded in the contemporary open society, success ethic ideology of the larger northern society in the first half of the nineteenth century.[48] America, according to this ideology, was open, progressive. Opportunity for advancement existed for all individuals regardless of their class or ethnic origins. All that was required was that a person possess certain qualities generally associated with Protestant economic-social values: ambition, honesty, frugality, and ascetic dedication to one's work. It was axiomatic that if a person did not "get ahead" in life he had no one to blame but himself. Whether the message came from sermons, political speeches, elementary school McGuffy readers, or dime literature like the Horatio Alger stories, Americans were told to improve themselves, to advance themselves in terms of job status or material comforts and property.

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[48]See Irvin G. Wyllie, Self-Made Man in America (New York, 1954), p. 54 passim; John Ward, Andrew Jackson--Symbol for an Age (New York, 1953; reprint ed., 1975), especially Chapter Nine, "The Self-Made Man," pp. 166-80; Stephan Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City (Boston, 1964; fourth reprint ed., New York, 1970), especially Chapter Three, "The Promise of Mobility," pp. 57-79; Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War (New York, 1970); and James A. Henretta, "The Study of Social Mobility: Ideological

This open society success ethic had roots in America's past, specifically in the Puritan tradition of the "calling," and in the related belief that outward material success was a sign of inner worth.[49] It also harkened back to the Lockean-Jeffersonian ideal of a society in which everyone, by virtue of property holdings, or an independent livelihood, had a "stake-in-society."[50] But the open society success ethic was also a product of nineteenth-century America, an industrializing society in which it was becoming increasingly less possible for people to acquire their own land or their own businesses. A visible, and

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and Conceptual Bias," Labor History 18 (Spring, 1977): 165-78.

[49]On the concept of the "calling" and its relationship to economic development and individual material striving see Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1958); and R. H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (London, 1936). Useful studies which relate the Protestant Ethic to socio-economic developments in seventeenth and eithteenth-century colonial American society are Frederick B. Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House, The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia 1682-1763 (New York, 1963); Bernard Bailyn, "The Apoligia of Robert Keayne," The William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series 7 (October, 1950):568-87; and Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," The William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series 24 (January, 1967):3-43.

[50]See C. B. Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke (London, 1970); Merrill D. Peterson, The Jeffersonian Image in the American Mind (New York, 1960); and Richard Hofstadter, "Thomas Jefferson: The Aristocrat as Democrat," in The American Political Tradition (New York, 1948):18-44.

growing, urban non-propertied working class made this fact irrefutable.[51] It is in this context that the ways in which Lowell's middle-class leaders expressed the success ethic in the period between 1830 and 1860 need to be examined.

As already noted, the early years of Lowell's history were seen by many people as a testing ground: could America avoid the unfortunate social effects industrializing European countries seemed helpless to prevent, especially the development of a poverty-stricken, urban proletariat? The Reverend Amos Blanchard of Lowell was convinced in 1830 that America could proceed along an alternate path of development. Despite the fact that America was "to be a manufacturing country" with populous towns and cities, no permanent proletariat would develop because Americans "like the particles in the mass of boiling liquid, are constantly changing places." Working-class people would not just move from place to place without changing their status. Instead because of "the constant though noiseless revolutions which [American] society is undergoing," it is possible to expect the "industrious tenants of our mills . . . to become themselves at no distant day proprietors," and to achieve a "competent, if not affluent

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[51] See David Montgomery, "Working Classes of the Pre-industrial City, 1780-1830," Labor History 9 (1968): 3-22, in conjunction with Norman Ware, The Industrial Worker, 1840-1860 (Boston, 1924; rep. ed., Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1959).

wealth." In America:

> . . . we cling to the hope that, under the operation of our social system, manufacturers will never become a distinct caste, doomed as families, to mere mechanical toil, and aspiring to no higher education for themselves or their children than is requisite to make them convenient appendages of the machinery which they work.[52]

Blanchard's airy optimism in 1836 may be compared with mill agent John Aiken's more qualified interpretation of the success ethic. Aiken, in 1849, like other leading citizens, could not ignore that Lowell had large numbers of poor wage earners. However, he insisted that while they may "begin life in this way" they have no "intention of following it permanently." The goal is for young men "to gain a capital" so that they can "establish themselves in business on their own account." For "the poorest boy, if he be industrious and frugal, when attained to manhood, may be found a man of substance, and in his old age, a man of weal." Significantly, Aiken felt that belief in equal opportunity had "stimulated [individual] industry in a very high degree."[53]

Aiken's cautious confidence was shared by other Lowellians, but some also saw that many working-class people seemed to be caught in poverty, with little chance for escape. For instance, the city physician in 1858, Nathan Allen, commented soberly: "There is reason to

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[52]Quoted in Bender, Toward an Urban Vision, pp. 111-12.

[53]Quoted in ibid., p. 112.

apprehend [poverty] may increase from year to year hereafter in Lowell."[54] A permanent working class might indeed be in the making. Cowley, for one, assumed this might be the case in the 1870s as we have already seen. Nevertheless, the success ethic stressed self-improvement, and for this reason Lowell's town leaders were not willing to scuttle their belief in the open society. In 1853 the Lowell School Committee Report observed that in rural New England children of farmers had learned the skills necessary for success in agriculture in the family. The Lowell municipal government, through the agency of public schooling, would provide for urban children what their families could not: training on how to succeed in an urban, industrial setting.[55] In 1855 Mayor Ambrose Lawrence made the same point a little less directly: "Next to the benign influence of religion, the cause of education should be cherished, as essential to the well-being of the community."[56] In 1855 the School Committee Report had a special comment to make regarding Lowell's foreign population: "Every intelligent foreigner should understand that his sons will never be able to successfully compete with our own sons" unless they are trained in the schools.[57] This faith in the assimilative role of the

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[54]Quoted in ibid., p. 109.

[55]Ibid., p. 122.

[56]Quoted in ibid., p. 121.

[57]Quoted in ibid.

school vis-a-vis the immigrant was still expressed a decade later when the same Ministry-at-Large report which characterized French Canadians as being "in a low sensual condition of life . . . less disposed than others to improve themselves" also stated confidently: "The great hope is with the children, who, in our common schools, are readily acquiring our language and adopting our ideas and feelings, and will become teachers to their parents."[58] Cowley made a similar point, but his comment referred to adults. In 1868 he found that French Canadians readily imbibed "the spirit of progress" which characterized "other classes" in Lowell. As proof of this he pointed out that "one of the first fruits of their immigration was a literary society, called the Association Franco-Canadienne de Lowell."[59]

III

How did Lowell residents react in these years to the increasing number of French Canadians in their midst? Since to be French Canadian in Lowell in the 1870s was almost invariably synonymous with being working class, we can begin to answer this question by looking at how

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[58] Twenty-second Annual Report of the Ministry-at-Large, p. 5. See Berton J. Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America (New York, 1976). Bledstein provides an insightful analysis of the importance of the value of higher education for nineteenth-century middle-class Americans within the context of the success ethic.

[59] Cowley, History of Lowell, pp. 206-07.

Lowell's middle-class leaders felt about working-class people.[60] Prominent Lowellians had believed in the possibility of working-class people, immigrants included, to improve themselves through hard work, frugality, and self-improvement. But by the 1870s Lowell's leaders were qualifying their faith in the American dream: not all working-class people would or could realize the American promise of individual betterment.

A n'er-do-well, shiftless, hobo group within the working class existed which plagued every community, even Lowell.[61] Town leaders were more concerned, however, in the 1870s with a growing group of "laboring poor," people who were unable to improve their condition despite hard work, who eked out bare subsistence lives in flush times and who needed some form of private or public charity or relief to survive in times of job scarcity and business recessions or depressions. The existence of this latter group caused some well-to-do Lowell citizens to question the validity of the American success ethic.[62] Some cler-

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[60]Regarding the working-class nature of the French-Canadian population see chapter 4 where I analyze occupational structure.

[61]In 1872 the Ministry reported that the City Marshall's department had to deal with "professional 'tramps,' the lowest order of human parasites, who trudge from city to city, and feed upon the public." Twenty-eight Annual Report of the Ministry-at-Large in Lowell (Lowell, 1873), p. 3.

[62]Bender, Toward an Urban Vision, pp. 108-09.

gymen in the Ministry-at-Large began to feel that people could be poor and remain so through no fault of their own. One member of the Ministry, who provided a glimpse into the life of some of Lowell's laboring-poor families in 1871, did not blame the people themselves for the meagreness of their lives. He was, however, distressed by what he saw: individuals entrapped in an interminable round of work and want:

> A large class of our laboring poor are men of large families with very small pay. Very few earn more than $500 a year, and many of them not more than $300. There are families of seven or eight persons within my knowledge living on six or seven dollars a week, and some of three or four in a family living on less than two dollars a week. Both men and women go to their work day after day with nothing but a few dry crackers and a little black molasses to eat, and sometimes with not so much as that. Frequently I have learned of their having gone to their work without a mouthful of anything to strengthen their failing energies. And there are those who never see a morsel of meat upon the table for weeks together. And they are driven to accept tenements at high rates in filthy streets and alleys, in uncomfortable attics or damp basements. Thus with poor food, uncomfortable houses and scanty clothing, their vitality is forced down almost to the freezing point.[63]

Again, along the same lines, a Ministry spokesman described a typical day in the lives of Lowell's laboring poor:

> The house is closed in the morning at 6 o'clock,--or is left in charge of a few little children, too young to go to the mill,--and not opened again except, perhaps, for a few minutes at noon, till

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[63] Twenty-seventh Annual Report of the Ministry-at-Large in Lowell (Lowell, 1872), pp. 14-15.

> seven in the evening. At that time, after a long hard day's work, there is but little energy left to cook up savory dishes, or to carefully mend all the little rents made in the children's clothing during the day.[64]

Lowell French Canadians were destined to be hard-working and poor in this era; yet they shunned public charity and accepted private charity only from their own community institutions.[65] The Ministry, which was representative of Lowell's middle-class leadership, distinguished between a deserving, laboring-poor group and a shiftless, lazy group within the working class. It also spoke of newcomers to Lowell--ethnicity not specified--who "though poor in purse" were "rich in honesty of purpose and genuine goodness of heart," who "when settled into work" became "excellent citizens, adding to the wealth of the city by their industry and economy."[66] We could expect, then, many Lowell citizens to take the Ministry's lead, to be sympathetic to French Canadians. For within the context of the Ministry's value orientation, which matched that of other middle-class citizens, Lowell French Canadians in the 1870s led respectable working-class lives.

Nevertheless, French Canadians were foreigners, and

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[64] Twenty-eighth Annual Report of the Ministry, p. 10.

[65] See chapter 4 on earning a living, chapter 6 on standard of living, and chapter 7 on community development.

[66] Twenty-eighth Annual Report of the Ministry, p. 4.

they were described on one occasion by the Ministry as "low" and "sensual" and ill-disposed towards improving themselves.[67] Although comments such as this were infrequent in Lowell in the 1870s--indeed references to French Canadians are almost nonexistent in newspapers, city records, and the like--in the broader New England society, a certain racist sterotype was developing of which Lowellians could hardly have been unaware. French Canadians and Irish people were often seen as possessing a similar, and negative, set of characteristics: they were unskilled workers, had low living standards and lower morals, were under the power of priests, and avoided schooling for their children.[68] The French Canadians, in contradistinction to the Irish, also tended to pick up stakes on a moment's whim; they were, then, unreliable employees.[69] Another softer, albeit still racist, set of characteristics was also used to describe French Canadians, one that portrayed them as care-free, somewhat crafty peasants of noble, Norman ancestry. Novelist William Dean Howells, seeing French Canadians at work in a Cambridge brickyard, described them as a "windy-voiced, good-humoured group" like "so many peasant folk . . . always amiably quarreling before the cabarets." He also believed French-Canadian

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[67] Twenty-second Annual Report of the Ministry,

[68] Barbara M. Solomon, Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition (Chicago, 1972), pp. 160-61.

[69] Ibid.

customers were "wary" and shrewd bargainers when they came into contact with Yankee shopkeepers.[70] Nathaniel Shaler, a naturalist, agreed with some of Howell's points and denied that French Canadians were more shiftless than the Irish; he even found them to possess certain qualities associated with the Protestant Ethic:

> Mingled with the Yankee population, the Canadians become a frugal, industrious, even hard-working people, somewhat given to drink and rather immoral, but with none of that shiftlessness which belongs to the Irishman of the same grade . . . . He is a little fellow, but very vigorous, energetic, plausible, able to make his way with his tongue to much advantage, careful of his money and anxious to get it. With a name which might once have been noble, and a person which looks gentlemanly with the slightest aid of dress, he is still only a good specimen of the peasant-folk of his race.[71]

The stereotype of the Franch Canadian, then, appears to have had two sides in this era, that of the shiftless, morally weak, non-individualistic worker versus that of the amiable, fun-loving, shrewd, reliable peasant. By the 1880s, however, the attitude towards French Canadians had hardened considerably. This was due in large part to difficult socio-economic realities. In one decade, the 1870s, many French Canadians--roughly 60,000--spilled over the border into New England in search of work.[72] Most settled

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[70] William Dean Howells, Suburban Sketches (Boston, 1884), p. 62.

[71] Nathaniel Shaler, "The Summer Journey of a Naturalist," Atlantic Monthly 21 (1873):713.

[72] Ralph Vicero estimates the number of French Canadians to be 7,420 in New England in 1860; in 1870 his estimate is 2500. Within the decade much movement back and forth across the border occurred. Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England," p. 275.

in textile towns like Lowell where their labor power was in demand.[73] As has been the case with every immigrant group coming to America, French Canadians, as working-class newcomers, faced resentment from other working-class people, particularly the native Americans and the Irish, who already had a stake in the communities French Canadians entered. Although the depression of 1873 resulted in a reverse migration of many French Canadians back to Canada, a large number remained in New England to compete with others in a job market which could not employ everyone.[74] French Canadians, like many

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[73]Ibid., p. 316.

[74]On reverse migration see the testimonies of two textile mill owners, one in Montreal, Quebec, and one in Cornwall, Ontario, who stated in 1876 that much of their help were French Canadians who had spent some time in the United States in textile towns working in the mills. The employer in Cornwall referred specifically to Lowell:

> "There are a large number of people in Lower Canada that have been in Lowell, Massachusetts, and other cotton mills [sic] in the United States; they are now coming to us in large numbers. We are getting them over here as the trade is depressed, and a great many consequently find their way home. Some of the mills there have sent a great many here."

See Canada, House of Commons, Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Present Depression of the Manufacturing, Mining, Commercial, Shipping, Lumber, and Fishing Interests, Journal of the House, app. 3, 1876, p. 146. See p. 136. regarding Montreal. In 1874 the Ministry-at-Large report stated that a Montreal paper had noted that by the first of December, 1873, 30,000 French Canadians had returned from New England to Canada. Twenty-ninth Annual Report of the Ministry-at-Large in Lowell (Lowell, 1874), p. 4. Regarding the permanent residency pattern of French Canadians in many New England towns, see Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, pp. 74, 80. Canadian immigration officers and repatriation agents commented on the lack of permanent return migration among many French Canadians. In the depression period of the 1870s it was not uncommon for French Canadians to return

others, migrated from place to place within New England in these years in the oftentimes vain search for employment.[75] But the very qualities which employers, especially in the textile industry, found so appealing in French Canadians--their willingness to work, like the Irish before them, long hours for low wages--created serious problems for French Canadians in relation to other working-class people. By the 1880s the labor movement as well as many public officials and politicans were blaming French Canadians for the inability of labor to win a ten-hour day in the textile industry.[76] Illustrative of this attitude is the Massa-

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to Canada temporarily to weather hard times. Sometimes parents stayed on in Canada, but their children almost invariably returned to the states when job prospects improved. See same bureau report, pp. 60-61, 74, 80-81; and Blazon, "The French Canadian Community of Suncook," pp. 67-68.

[75]On the tendency of French Canadians to move to new towns within New England when jobs were scarce see Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, First Annual Report, 1870, p. 222; Third Annual Report, 1872, pp. 375-76; and Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 17. See also Blazon, "The French Canadian Community of Suncook," pp. 63-66.

[76]Textile factories preferred to hire women and children rather than men. They could perform most unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, be paid less than men, and only with great difficulty and sacrifice to family economies be organized for effective labor protest. Since this practice antedated the coming of the French Canadians it was unjust to point the finger at them when the ten-hour movement of the 1870s and union organizing attempts failed. French-Canadian men usually worked as common laborers or less often as skilled craftsmen in this era, while French-Canadian women and children worked in the mills. See my analysis of the French-Canadian occupational structure in Lowell in 1870 in chapter 4. See also Blazon, "The French Canadian Community of Suncook," p. 140; Haebler, "Habitants of Holyoke," pp. 66-67; and Philip P. Silvia, "The Spindle City:

chusetts Bureau of the Statistics of Labor Report of 1881 which labelled French Canadians the "Chinese of the Eastern States." It is worth quoting at length:

> With some exceptions the Canadian French are the Chinese of the Eastern States. They care nothing for our institutions, civil, political, or educational . . . . They are a horde of industrial invaders, not a stream of stable settlers . . . . They will not send their children to school if they can help it, but endeavor to crowd them into the mills at the earliest possible age . . . . They deceive also about their schooling, declaring that they have been to school the legal time, when they know they have not, and do not intend that they shall. And when at length they are cornered by the school officers, and there is no other escape, often they scrabble together what few things they have, and move away to some other place . . . . And when, as is indeed sometimes the case, any of them are so situated that they cannot escape at all, then the stolid indifference of the children wears out the teacher with what seems to be an idle task.
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> These people have one good trait. They are indefatigable workers, and docile. All they ask is to be set to work, and they care little who rules them or how they are ruled. To earn all they can by no matter how many hours of toil, to live in the most beggardly way so that out of their earnings they may spend as little for living as possible, and to carry out of the country what they can thus save: this is the aim of the Canadian French in our factory districts. Incidentally they must have some amusements; and so far as the males are concerned, drinking and smoking and lounging constitute the

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Labor, Politics and Religion in Fall River, Massachusetts 1870-1905 (Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 1973), pp. 346-47. In 1880 63 per cent of the workers in the cotton goods industry in New England were women and children. The same percentage applied to Massachusetts. Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England," p. 321. French Canadians could and did organize with other workers in the textile industry to improve their wages and working conditions in this era. In 1880 and in 1882 French Canadians, primarily women and children, participated in strikes along with Irish operatives at the Harmony Mills in Cohoes, New York. See Walkowitz, Worker City, Company Town, pp. 191-92, 219-29.

sum of these.

> Now, it is not strange that so sordid and low a people should awaken corresponding feelings in the managers, and that these should feel that, the longer the hours for such people, the better, and that to work them to the uttermost is about the only good use they can be put to. Nor is it strange that this impression is so strong, that the managers overlook for the time being all the rest of the operatives, and think that every thing should be shaped to these lowest ones.[77]

The comment that French Canadians were a "sordid and low" people recalls the Lowell Ministry-at-Large reference in 1866 to them as "low" and "sensual." The portrayal of French Canadians in this bureau report is a far cry from the Lowell middle-class ideal of socially responsible, educated working-class individuals and families who could improve their position in society. This image of French Canadians is also far removed from the description of "laboring poor" people, seemingly caught in a poverty-stricken life through no fault of their own. Instead, as the "Chinese of the Eastern States," French Canadians as a group resemble a collective hobo populace--a menace to the values and institutions and economic well-being of New England society.

However in 1881 a number of Lowell citizens came forward to vauch for the integrity and respectability of

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[77] Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Twelfth Annual Report, 1881, pp. 469-70.

French Canadians in their community.[78] An overseer of the Lawrence Manufacturing Company, a textile corporation, stated: "I employ about seventy-five French Canadian people mostly males. I find them as a rule, punctual and steady in their work, and not given to drunkenness."[79] Another textile mill overseer of the Tremont and Suffolk Company also described French-Canadian operatives positively:

> It is my opinion, that as regards thrift, sobriety, and general good behavior and application to their labors, they compare, as a class, favorably with either of the other classes--viz., American and Irish--employed on this corporation.[80]

Owners of a grocery store certified that "French Canadians as a class do like and use the best kind of meats and provisions, and don't live as paupers."[81]

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[78]This was done in response to the request of a group of Lowell French Canadians who were outraged at the "Chinese of the Eastern States" statement.

[79]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 44. It is unusual to find "mostly males" employed in a textile mill at this time in terms of French Canadians. It is possible that most worked as common laborers around the mill. Men were engaged in this capacity as well as in higher skilled jobs like loom fixing and mule spinning. By this date, too, it is possible that a number of French-Canadian men had learned the skills necessary for the better jobs for men in the mills.

[80]Ibid., p. 45. A French-Canadian commented in 1881 that a large number of French Canadians (sex not specified) worked in the Tremont and Suffolk mills, Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 47

[81]Ibid.

If there is reason to believe that Lowellians might have become increasingly less enthusiastic about the French-Canadian presence in Lowell in these years, the testimonies of the overseers and the grocery owners show that French Canadians had also earned a certain respect. In the 1870s the French Canadians' ability to create a strong ethnic community with religious and lay leaders whom native-American middle-class people respected also helped to provide them with a degree of social standing in Lowell.[82] But so far we have looked at how native Americans--largely representatives of the middle-class--appeared to view French Canadians in the 1870s. It is more difficult to discover how working-class individuals, be they American, Irish, or of another nationality, reacted to French Canadians in Lowell.

It appears reasonable to assume that the resentment expressed in the 1881 Bureau of Statistics report was shared by at least some working-class people in Lowell. Still, native-American and Irish workers in the mills usually held better jobs than French Canadians, which would have mitigated hostility towards the newcomers. Mills practiced job discrimination in terms of their work force's nationalities. In the 1850s native Americans had the edge over the Irish and other ethnic groups; the prevalence of native-American agents and overseers in the mills favored their [illegible]

especially important in relation to skilled jobs for men such as loom fixers or mule spinners. But it also applied to women; the better paying jobs for them were in the weaving and dressing departments, the lesser paying ones in the spinning and carding departments.[83] In the 1870s French Canadians, who had few of their people in supervisory positions, doubtless experienced the same kind of discrimination the Irish had in an earlier period before they had fellow countrymen in supervisory positions.[84] Since work was organized according to skill level into different departments in different areas of the mills, French Canadians, in the less skilled jobs, might have been somewhat segregated from operatives of other nationalities who worked in more highly skilled jobs.[85] This situation would have helped to keep antagonisms between ethnic groups in check. Nevertheless, smoldering animosity and distrust existed and could erupt easily when various ethnic groups in working-class occupations were brought together into close proximity. By the 1860s textile corporations were losing interest in providing boarding houses for the now largely immigrant work force, partly because of the squabbles and physical fights

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[83]Dublin, "Women at Work," pp. 177-82.

[84]There were only two mill overseers who were French Canadian in my sample of Canadians taken from the United States manuscript census in 1870. See chapter 4.

[85]Dublin, "Women at Work," p. 182.

which broke out regularly when people of different nationalities lived in the same residences.[86]

Since one in five people in Lowell in 1870 were Irish it is important to have a fuller sense of how French Canadian and Irish people related to each other. However, this task is more easily completed within the context of the evolution of the French-Canadian community in Lowell, and will, therefore, be expanded upon in a later chapter.

In the meantime, by way of summary, it may be stated that French Canadians who came to live and work in Lowell in the 1870s entered a society which had a solid economic base and a high degree of class differentiation. A native-American middle class owned stocks in the town's main industry, textiles, and controlled the secondary and larger service industries and professions as well as the municipal government. A certain group of people earned their livings as petty proprietors of small-scale businesses like grocery stores or in artisanal trades like blacksmithing and carpentry. The vast majority, however, labored in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, as factory hands, day laborers, teamsters. This latter group had very little political power. With the exception of French Canadians, most of whom were not yet naturalized citizens,

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[86] Fidelia O. Brown, "Decline and Fall: The End of the Dream," in Cotton Was King, ed. by Eno, p. 142; and George F. Kenngott, Record of a City: A Social Survey of

most working-class men voted but they did not elect representatives of their class to office.[87] Nevertheless, a varied socio-cultural institutional structure existed with a wide participatory base which undoubtedly camouflaged or at least softened the sense of class in Lowell society at this time. The cautious and qualified version of the success ethic which middle-class native-American town leaders propounded also served to lessen class (and ethnic) hostilities in this era: some, even immigrants, could move out of the working class. Finally, tensions among ethnic groups and within the working class existed but did not lead to head-on collisions in the 1870s.

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[87]Mary H. Blewett, "Mills and Multitudes," in Cotton Was King, ed. by Eno, pp. 161-89.

CHAPTER III

IDENTIFYING THE FRENCH CANADIANS

Scholars who wish to use manuscript census returns to study certain aspects of French-Canadian or English-Canadian immigrant life in nineteenth-century American society must deal with a methodological problem which scholars who study other immigrant groups do not face. Since this source supplies the birthplace of individuals, it allows researchers to identify first generation ethnic groups such as the Irish or the English. However, until 1890 the federal manuscript census returns do not distinguish between French Canadians and English Canadians. In Massachusetts, aggregate state census returns do not make this distinction until 1885. Under place of birth only "Canada" appears.[1] Since English Canadians as well as French Canadians migrated to the United States in the course of the nineteenth century, researchers who use manuscript census returns to study individuals in either group need to develop a method to identify them.

A few historians have employed census returns to

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[1] Manuscript census returns for the Massachusetts state census only exist for the year 1865.

study French Canadians. But they have evaded the problem of distinguishing French Canadians from English Canadians by relying primarily on aggregate census returns. Some have acknowledged that an identification problem exists, but they have assumed that most Canadians were French Canadians. This assumption has led them to make generalizations about French Canadians in some American communities which might be inaccurate if significant proportions of Canadian-born individuals in any of these locations were English Canadians.[2]

To date only one scholar has presented a method for distinguishing French Canadians from other Canadians in manuscript census returns. Ralph Vicero in his excellent Ph.D. dissertation, a geographical analysis of French-Canadian immigration to New England, uses surname as the "key indicator" to estimate the number of French Canadians in "many of the towns and cities of New England." He warns that his surname identification method cannot provide completely reliable results because of the problems of "anglicization and distortion to the spelling of the orig-

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[2]See for instance, Haebler, "Habitants of Holyoke;" Michael H. Frisch, Town into City: Springfield, Massachusetts and the Meaning of Community, 1840-1880 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972); and Dean R. Esslinger, Immigrants and the City: Ethnicity and Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century Midwestern Community (Port Washington, New York, 1975). One historian, Daniel J. Walkowitz, uses manuscript census data to study French Canadians who lived in Cohoes, New York, in the 1870s and 1880s. He does not mention how he identified French Canadians in this source. See Walkowitz, Worker City, Company Town.

inal surnames." Vicero admits that the inaccuracy of the manuscript censuses in this regard presents "formidable problems to the investigator," but he fails to suggest how researchers might solve this problem.[3] The remainder of this chapter presents the method which was developed for this study to identify French Canadians in the Lowell manuscript census returns of 1870.

I

In 1868 a census sponsored by St. Joseph's, the newly founded French-Canadian Catholic Church, reported the presence of 1200 French Canadians in Lowell, half of whom were children.[4] In 1870 the published federal census merely reported the number of Canadians living in Lowell as 2620.[5] Examination of the manuscript census offers no additional clues: only "Canada" appears

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[3]Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England," p. 147.

[4]Santerre, Un peuple, p. 6. Santerre's study deals with the history of St. Joseph's parish from 1868 to 1968. In 1947 the name of the parish was changed to St. John the Baptist, and in 1974 it became St.-Jean-Baptiste. For this reason Santerre's complete title is: Un peuple et son rêve: St.-Jean-Baptiste de Lowell, Massachusetts, 1868-1968.

[5]Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, 1:386. As already mentioned it was not until 1890 that the federal census distinguished between French and English Canadians. Regrettably, most of the manuscript census for this year, including the section for Lowell, was destroyed by fire in 1921.

under place of birth.[6] As Vicero discovered the only possible indicator in the manuscript census which can be used to differentiate between English Canadians and French Canadians is surname. Inspection of the manuscript census for Lowell in 1870 reveals that many names of those born in Canada were French or at least appeared to be so phonetically. All census data for those individuals who had French names could have been coded. But this approach seemed unwise. It would have necessitated the use of a decision-making process which could not subsequently be modified or checked for errors and omissions. Instead, initially all persons born in Canada were coded in addition to those individuals not born in Canada who resided in households with Canadians. Thus, although individuals born in Canada numbered 2620 in 1870, 4320 individual census records were collected.

Once in possession of census records for all Canadians identification by name was the next step undertaken to establish the French-Canadian population. Only persons born in Canada with definite French surnames were identified as French Canadian. Spelling could be quite inaccurate, as in Valencur or Langtaue, but phonetically the name had to sound French. Individuals with ambiguous names like Herbert and Leonard were excluded.

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[6]Very infrequently "Canada East" appears.

The identification of French Canadians in this manner raised problems concerning family relationships.[7] Explicit family relationships were not provided in the 1870 census. But census enumerators were instructed to list the wife (and children) immediately after the husband or father. Since the identification method was by surname, a wife of a French Canadian, if born in Canada, would be automatically identified as French Canadian. However, a Canadian-born wife of a French Canadian might not have been French herself. Regrettably, because of this limitation in the census for 1870, there is no way to identify such cases, if they existed, from this source.

Identification of French-Canadian children also posed certain problems. Since it was apparent through sight inspection of the manuscript census that many French-Canadian children had not been born in Canada, it was necessary to include "children of French-Canadian fathers not born in Canada" as part of the identified French-Canadian population.[8] Again, as in the case with wives, the father-child relationship had to be inferred from the order in which the enumerator had listed members of house-

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[7]See appendix D, "Methodology for Investigating Family, Kin and Household from the U.S. Manuscript Census of 1870."

[8]Vicero attempts "to include those belonging to the third generation and beyond." However, he fails to discuss his method for accomplishing this task. Vicero, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England," p. 147.

holds. Use of the word "child" was not in this case related to the age of the child per se but to the age of the child in relation to its father: there had to be at least 15 years difference between the child's age and that of the father. In this manner 1448 "French Canadians" were identified; 1257 were French Canadians who were born in Canada and 191 were children of French-Canadian fathers who were not born in Canada. The sample of identified French Canadians born in Canada (1257) thus represents 48 per cent of the total Canadian-born population in Lowell in 1870.[9]

Identifying French Canadians by surname may introduce certain biases into the sample. Non-French Canadians may be included, while French Canadians with English or anglicized surnames may be excluded. Precisely because the method was by surname identification it appeared unlikely that the sample included many non-French Canadians. But a possibly significant portion of the French-Canadian population might have been excluded from the sample: those with non-French names. Omitting persons with ambiguous or misspelled names would not bias the sample. But if some French Canadians were anglicizing their names--and there is contemporary evidence to this effect--the exclusion of such individuals could create a

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[9]My sample is not random; rather it represents all persons living in Lowell in 1870 who have been identified by me as French Canadian.

bias if they differed from the general French-Canadian population with French names in important respects.[10] For example, over time they could have been more socially mobile than their apparently less-assimilationist compatriots who did not change their names.[11]

A method was developed to test for the two possible biases of inclusion of non-French Canadians and exclusion of French Canadians with non-French names. A source suitable for this task, Massachusetts marriage records, is available for Lowell. They provide the following information: date of marriage; names of bride and groom, including the bride's maiden name; place of residence at time of marriage; age; occupation (in Lowell records only occupations of grooms are provided); birthplace of bride and groom; forenames of parents of bride and groom; whether marriage was first, second, etc., for bride and groom; and the person who performed the ceremony. In the Lowell records religious affiliation or civil status, for example, Justice of the Peace, is usually appended to the name of the person performing

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[10]For Lowell in particular the parish priest, who in 1868 helped the city post office distribute mail to his parishioners, voiced his disapproval of Lowell French Canadians who were anglicizing their names. Santerre, Un peuple, p. 30.

[11]A complication presents itself: French Canadians with anglicized names cannot with certainty be separated from persons with misspelled names or with English names (non-anglicized). I discuss this problem in a later section of this chapter.

the marriage. If not included in the marriage records, directories or municipal vital statistics reports were consulted to determine the religious affiliation of Lowell clergymen.

Use of marriage records to test for bias in the identification process was based on the initial assumption that virtually all French Canadians who were married in Lowell chose to do so in their own parish church. It was hypothesized that if almost all the Canadians identified as French Canadians in the marriage records were married in a French-Canadian parish, it would be unlikely that non-French Canadians were being included in the census sample.[12] However, working in the opposite direction, what if a residual group of Canadians married in a French-Canadian church were discovered who were not identified as French Canadians? Assuming that non-French Canadians rarely married in the French-Canadian parish, it might have to be conceded that French Canadians who had English, anglicized, or misspelled surnames were being excluded from the census sample.[13]

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[12]The same surname criteria were employed here as that used for the census.

[13]Doubtless because Lowell had three other Catholic Churches in 1868, all English-speaking, non-French Canadians generally did not marry in the French-Canadian parish. Only 20 couples were married in the French-Canadian church in these years where neither partner was Canadian born. The majority of men and women in this group had French names. Only one groom had been born in France;

The first step was to repeat the procedure for identifying French Canadians from the manuscript census. First, all information on each marriage performed in Lowell in the years 1869 through 1880 in cases where at least one of the marriage partners had been born in Canada was recorded. The number of such couples was 1776. Next, without checking to see who had performed the ceremony, a list was made of all grooms born in Canada with French-sounding names. Then the persons who married these couples were checked to discover how many had been married in a French-Canadian parish. This method identified 616 grooms. According to the marriage records 573 of these men were wedded in the French-Canadian church. Only 43 "extra" couples had been identified.[14] Thus the surname identification method from this test appears fairly accurate and non-biased. Few non-French Canadians had been included: 93 per cent of the identified grooms (573 of 616) were married in a French-Canadian parish (see table 1).

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the others, American-born, were probably mostly 2nd or 3rd generation French Canadian. An additional 47 couples were married in the parish in these years where only the bride was Canadian born. Almost all the brides had French maiden names, many of the grooms did. Again, most of these grooms--excepting the seven born in France--were probably of French-Canadian stock.

[14]It is likely that some of the grooms in this residual group of 43 actually were French Canadians since a large proportion of them, 60 per cent, married French-Canadian women (women born in Canada with French names).

TABLE 1

IDENTIFICATION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN GROOMS MARRIED IN THE FRENCH-CANADIAN PARISH, 1869 THROUGH 1880

Year	No. of Identified F.C. Grooms (Group 1)	No. of Identified F.C. Grooms Married in the Parish (Group 2)	No. of Identified F.C.s not Married in the Parish[a] (Group 3)	Percentage of Identified F.C. Grooms Married in the Parish
1869	42	39	3	93
1870	30	28	2	93
1871	63	63	0	100
1872	53	46	7	87
1873	51	46	5	90
1874	38	34	4	90
1875	37	37	3	92
1876	32	31	1	97
1877	50	43	7	86

TABLE 1--Continued

Year	No. of Identified F.C. Grooms (Group 1)	No. of Identified F.C. Grooms Married in the Parish (Group 2)	No. of Identified F.C.s not Married in the Parish[a] (Group 3)	Percentage of Identified F.C. Grooms Married in the Parish
1878	45	44	1	98
1879	61	54	7	88
1880	114	111	3	97
Total	616	573	43	93

SOURCE: Massachusetts Vital Statistics, Lowell Marriage Records, 1869-1880.

[a]Difference between Groups 1 and 2.

However, had many French-Canadian couples escaped the identification net? The second half of the testing procedure sought to establish whether any additional Canadian grooms not identified by me as French Canadian had been married in a French-Canadian parish in the years 1869 through 1880. The search revealed that 63 or 10 per cent of the total 636 Canadian-born grooms married in the French-Canadian parish had been missed.[15] These men were omitted because their names appear to be English or are ambiguous. A large proportion of the names in this group, one-third (20), seem to be indisputably English. Perkins Nichols, Edward Prescott, Hector Dunn, and Peter Scott are examples. However, most names are ambiguous: Abraham Alexander could be Alexandre, David Mason might be Masson, and Euzebe Norman could be French or English. When the forenames of parents are considered, especially in the case of many of the ambiguous-groom surnames, the suspicion that these grooms were French Canadian becomes

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[15]By all Canadian-born grooms I am referring to the 636 married in a French-Canadian parish in this twelve-year period, the 573 identified by the first method and the 63 identified by the second method. See table 2. A total of 703 marriages were performed in the French-Canadian parish between 1868 and 1881, 636 marriages where the groom was Canadian-born, 67 where he was not.

TABLE 2

IDENTIFICATION OF GROOMS MARRIED IN THE FRENCH-CANADIAN PARISH, 1869 THROUGH 1880

Year	No. of Identified F.C. Grooms Married in Parish (Group 1)	No. of Cdn-Born Grooms not Identified as F.C. Married in F.C. Parish (Group 2)	Total Cdn-Born Grooms Married in Parish[a] (Group 3)	Percentage of Nonidentified F.C. Grooms Married in Parish
1869	39	1	40	2
1870	28	5	33	15
1871	63	6	69	9
1872	46	9	55	16
1873	46	8	54	15
1874	34	3	37	8
1875	34	5	39	13
1876	31	2	33	6
1877	43	4	47	8

TABLE 2--Continued

Year	No. of Identified F.C. Grooms Married in Parish (Group 1)	No. of Cdn-Born Grooms not Identified as F.C. Married in F.C. Parish (Group 2)	Total Cdn-Born Grooms Married in Parish[a] (Group 3)	Percentage of Nonidentified F.C. Grooms Married in Parish
1878	44	5	49	10
1879	54	8	62	13
1880	111	7	118	6
Total	573	63	636	10

SOURCE: Massachusetts Vital Statistics, Lowell Marriage Records, 1869-1880.

[a]Groups 1 and 2 combined.

stronger. David Mason's parents' names were Godfroy and Delphine, Euzebe Norman's, Registe and Rose.

Given the ambiguity rather than the anglicization of so many of the names in this marriage group, the possibility that many French Canadians were missed who had either English names or purposefully anglicized names in the 1870 census appears remote. The hypothesis mentioned earlier in the chapter that a separate, perhaps more socially mobile sub-group of French Canadians with English surnames existed in Lowell in these years appears unfounded. As can be seen in table 2 (group 2 column) the number of grooms missed because of English or ambiguous surnames remained consistently small throughout the decade of the seventies. The group of missed French-Canadian grooms--1 in 10--consisted largely of persons with ambiguous surnames. Therefore, the probability that a significant number of French Canadians in the census who had ambiguous surnames was omitted appears strong. Individuals with names like Norman or Mason were excluded, while persons with names like Dozois and Ducharme were included.[16] But there is no reason to assume bias because a family named Dozois is part of the census sample and a family named Norman is not. Rather, it means that each

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[16]All four surnames appear both in the marriage records and in the manuscript census.

and every French Canadian living in Lowell in 1870 could not with certainty be identified.

Use of the marriage records for the years 1869 through 1880 has revealed that the identification method may include a handful of non-French Canadians and omit a small proportion of French Canadians with English or ambiguous surnames. However, since the percentages for both these groups are small (7 per cent and 10 per cent respectively), it appears logical to conclude that the method of identifying French Canadians is fairly accurate and unbiased.

However, a word of caution must be introduced at this point: it is possible that the marriage-record test has neglected to take a certain segment of the French-Canadian population into account. Did virtually all French Canadians, as has been assumed, choose to marry in the French-Canadian parish? We have seen that almost all French Canadians with French names did so. But it is conceivable that French Canadians with purposefully anglicized names might have shunned the French-Canadian parish. If so, they would have set themselves apart from the general French-Canadian population in two crucial ways, name change and rejection of their church. Extending this line of thought, such persons might have represented a more socially mobile sub-group; at least

they might have shared assimilationist expectations which were at variance with French Canadians who chose to retain their names and to maintain allegiance to their church. What does this mean in terms of the census sample? We must admit that more French Canadians might have been missed in the census than indicated in the marriage-record test. However, the exclusion of such (hypothetical) persons does not bias the census sample. Rather it gives us a sharper picture of it. For what we are considering in this particular census group are French-Canadian immigrants who adhered in this era to important symbols of their native culture, language and religion.

II

It is unfortunate that the sources available do not provide the exact number of French Canadians resident in Lowell in 1870. The surname identification process identified as French Canadian 48 per cent of the total Canadian-born population. Contemporary commentaries report exclusively upon the large numbers of French Canadians pouring into Lowell. Not a word appears regarding English Canadians.[17] And yet the impression which remains after

[17] See Twenty-second Annual Report of the Ministry, p. 4, Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Fourth Annual Report, 1873, p. 280, and Charles Cowley, "The Foreign Colonies of Lowell," in Contributions of the Old Residents' Historical Association, Lowell, Massachusetts, vol. 2 (Lowell, 1883), pp. 175-76. It is probable that English Canadians, because they spoke English

coding every Canadian-born person listed in the census is that while by far the majority were French Canadians, some, indeed, were English Canadians.

Use of marriage records has reinforced the initial impression, based upon work with the manuscript census, that English Canadians were an important element of the total Canadian-born population of Lowell in the 1870s. The testing procedure for establishing the accuracy of the surname identification method has substantiated the assumption that the vast majority of French Canadians married in the French-Canadian parish. Thus a rough comparison of the proportion of French and English Canadians marrying in this period can be made.

If French Canadians are defined as Canadian-born individuals (men and women) married in a French-Canadian parish, there are 1291 such persons in the marriage records for the years 1869 through 1880 (see table 3). If English Canadians are defined as Canadian-born individuals not married in a French-Canadian church, 485 such persons

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and possessed cultural traits similar to the Lowell native-American population, were in a sense "invisible" or at least inconspicuous in contrast to French Canadians. It is not surprising perhaps that contemporaries neglected to mention this immigrant group. One small immigrant group, the Scots, who numbered only 469 in 1870, received extensive coverage in the Ministry reports in the five year period preceding and following 1870, the census year. See Ministry reports for these years. The Scottish population figure appears in Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, 1:389.

TABLE 3

CANADIANS MARRYING IN THE FRENCH-CANADIAN PARISH, 1869-1880

Years	Total No. Married	Married in F.C. Parish		Married outside F.C. Parish	
		No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
1869 and 1870	200	156	78	44	22
1869-1880	1776	1291	73	484	27

SOURCE: Massachusetts Vital Statistics, Lowell Marriage Records, 1869-1880.

are uncovered. Thus, of the 1776 Canadian-born individuals married in Lowell in these years, 73 per cent (1291) were French Canadians. If only the years 1869 and 1870 are considered, 78 per cent (156 of 200) were French Canadians.

The discovery that 3 of every 4 Canadian-born persons marrying in 1869 and 1870 were probably French Canadians has reinforced the impression that the census sample, which identifies as French Canadian only about half of the Canadian-born population, underestimates rather significantly the actual number of French Canadians living in Lowell at this time. While the 48 per cent census figure may be viewed as a lower-limit estimate, the 78 per cent marriage-record figure may be viewed as an upper-limit estimate.

Given the contemporary comments regarding the influx of French Canadians into Lowell in these years it appears reasonable to assume that the proportion of French Canadians to English Canadians was closer to the 3 to 1 marriage-record ratio than the 1 to 1 census ratio. Nevertheless, the census and marriage-record populations are not strictly comparable. For instance, the finding that 22 per cent of all persons married in 1869 and 1870 were English Canadians may represent an overestimate of the English-Canadian population if English Canadians were

marrying at a greater frequency than French Canadians because of different characteristics, such as age structure and sex ratios, in the two populations. The answer can only be determined by researching the major demographic features of the Lowell English-Canadian population in comparison with those of the French-Canadian population a task which lies beyond the parameters of this study.

For the present it appears that the method for identifying French Canadians from the census--and, by extension, from the marriage records--is reliable. We can state with assurance, therefore, that this study deals only with French Canadians. And though an exact figure on the French-Canadian population in 1870 cannot be provided we can estimate that at least about 1300 or half of the Canadian-born individuals in Lowell were French Canadian while possibly close to 2000 or roughly three-quarters were.

CHAPTER IV

EARNING A LIVING

> The habits of a people, their social tastes, and moral standards, would be more truthfully depicted in a complete list of their daily occupations, than ever was done in any book of travels or of history.[1]

During the Civil War years the Lowell textile factories closed. The corporations declared there was not enough cotton to run the mills, and thousands of mill workers lost their jobs. Many men marched off "to wrest cotton from the grasp of the rebels."[2] Many women left Lowell, too, either to return to farm families or to find jobs elsewhere. A large proportion of the pre-war textile labor force did not return to Lowell after the Civil War. But when the mills reopened in 1865 people came flooding into Lowell in search of employment. By 1866 the mills were again fully operational, and Lowell's overall economy was expanding as a result.[3]

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[1] "Report of the Superintendent," Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, 1:xxxiii.

[2] The New York Herald, January 13, 1862, quoted in Stanley E. Howard, The Movement of Wages in the Cotton Manufacturing Industry of New England since 1860 (Boston, 1920), p. 52. During the war 4,763 men from Lowell enlisted. Lowell's population was 36,827 in 1860; in 1865 it was 30,990. Census of Massachusetts, 1875, 1:743.

[3] The effect of the war on Lowell society was discussed in chapter 2. In addition to the works cited there see Howard, Movement of Wages, pp. 52-54; Edwin P. Conklin,

In 1870, between 1300 and 2000 French Canadians resided in Lowell. Many of them had been habitants back in Quebec. But some had earned their livings in other ways--in the countryside as day laborers, in the forests as lumbermen, in villages and towns as artisans, small shopkeepers, or physicians. A few had left larger urban areas, Montreal, Quebec, or Three Rivers, where they had worked in varied occupations such as common laborers, construction workers, and factory hands.[4] But whatever they had done at home, they pulled up stakes and came to Lowell for mainly one reason: a materially more rewarding and secure life. Given the depressed state of the Quebec economy, French Canadians often felt they had no choice. As noted in the report of the Seventh Census of Canada (1931), French Canadians were impelled to resettle in New England in this period "not in quest of a higher standard of living but to avoid a lower."[5]

This chapter will investigate how these new immigrants earned their livelihoods in the City of Spindles in 1870. These findings will serve as the base for determining in a later chapter the standard-of-living of French Cana-

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Middlesex County and its People, vol. 2 (New York, 1927), p. 474; and Coburn, History of Lowell, p. 305.

[4]This is an inference based upon findings in chapter 1 regarding Quebec's economy and social structure at this time. It will be recalled that people from many different walks of life could and did become emigrants. See particularly Quebec, Legislative Assembly, Report on Agriculture, Immigration and Colonization, 1867-68, App. 12, not paginated.

[5]Quoted in Podea, "Quebec to 'Little Canada'" in The Aliens, ed. by Dinnerstein and Jaher, p. 307.

dians in Lowell in the 1870s. The occupational distribution of Lowell's entire population will also be discussed. In this way it will be possible to have a sense of how much opportunity existed in Lowell for French Canadians to advance themselves over time through job mobility. Impressionistic findings on the occupational distribution of French Canadians in Lowell at the beginning of the 1880s will also be touched upon briefly. Finally, preliminary results of research on occupational mobility patterns for young French Canadian husbands and fathers who remained in Lowell for at least several years after their marriages in the 1870s and early 1880s will be presented. But at this point a few comments concerning methodological and conceptual problems related to studying occupational structure and occupational mobility, and, by extension, social mobility, are in order.

I

The key to studying occupational structure and occupational mobility is a sophisticated classification system which can serve as the starting point for studying a related topic, social mobility.[6] Since historians have only recently begun to investigate these phenomena in a systematic way, the classification systems which have emerged

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[6]For a useful discussion of how quantitative yardsticks may be employed to measure social mobility see Katz, People of Hamilton, p. 138 passim. For discussions on the importance of culture in understanding social mobility rates for different groups of people see Henretta, "Study of Social Mobility," pp. 165-78; and Stephan Thernstrom, "Notes on the Historical Study of Social Mobility," in Don Karl Rowney and James Z. Graham, Jr., Quantitative History (Homewood, Illinois, 1969), pp. 99-108.

are almost as numerous and varied as the persons who are involved in such research. Because so many different classification methods are used, comparative results are difficult to achieve. Of late, however, researchers have begun to pool their resources and knowledge in order to create classification schemes which can be used comparatively.

The occupational classification method which has been developed by the Philadelphia Social History Project (PSHP) exemplifies this new comparative trend. The PSHP, which is part of an in-depth comparative urban history of five cities, has as one of its goals a comprehensive understanding of the overall occupational structure of nineteenth-century North America. To this end the PSHP scholars have fashioned a classification system which designates occupations in terms of nine different divisions.[7]

One of the nine divisions, the Vertical or VERT, ranks occupations hierarchically. The VERT consists of six basic categories: professional and high white-collar, proprietary and low white-collar, skilled, craft, unskilled specified, unskilled unspecified and other unskilled.[8] The

[7] The nine divisions are: identification (of occupation), consolidation (of occupation), vertical, sector of the economy, wholesale-retail, stages of the job cycle, worksite, functional industry. For a complete discussion of this system see Theodore Hershberg and Robert Dockhorn, "Occupational Classification," Historical Methods Newsletter 9 (March-June, 1976):59-98.

[8] There are three additional categories which follow the unskilled groups as follows: site or product only, no occupation, and unclassifiable. Site or product only designates persons who report place of work or product resulting from work only such as "provision store" or "dry goods."

choice of these six categories was determined by combining *a priori* assumptions about the nature of occupational stratification in the nineteenth century, such as the degree of prestige or status attached to specific occupations, and empirical findings regarding the differences in occupations based on such factors as wealth and wages. In addition, knowledge about the ways occupations were described in nineteenth-century sources, especially the major source for occupation studies, the manuscript censuses, contributed to the way the VERT categories were chosen.

The researchers working with PSHP regard this VERT as a provisional tool for studying occupational structure and occupational mobility. They foresee and even urge modification of their VERTs in accordance with the particular needs of specific studies. They expect that the VERTs will eventually need to be further sub-divided to achieve greater accuracy, especially when investigating occupational mobility.

For this study the PSHP VERT categories for skilled and unskilled occupations were used with the possibility in mind that refinement of these categories might eventually be necessary. However, the number above the skilled category was expanded to eight: professional; commercial; manufacturer and builder/contractor; high white-collar/managerial; proprietary; para-professional; low white-collar; and public service employees. These eight categories were em-

ployed in order to have a finely focused picture of how French Canadians, as new immigrants, were drawn into the American occupational structure at a specific date, with the idea that how their occupations changed over time would be a prime consideration of later work. It made little sense, for instance, to place proprietors and low white-collar workers in the same category, as was done in the Philadelphia project. Almost certainly a French Canadian who owned his own business would have had a higher income and would have enjoyed a higher status than a French-Canadian who was a clerk in a grocery store.

The skilled crafts category is fairly straightforward. The three unskilled categories, however, represent an innovative approach to classifying workers below the level of skilled and do require some explanation. The major characteristic of these categories, taken together, is that they do not attempt to distinguish unskilled occupations in terms of skill level. Instead they differentiate unskilled jobs in terms of the specificity of a job title or description. Those with clearly described occupations, like teamster, are classified as unskilled specified; those with unspecified functions, laborers, are unskilled unspecified; those who provide their place of work but do not indicate the kind of work done, like works in cotton mill, are other unskilled.

The reason for the lack of skill differentiation in

this system relates to the way occupations were reported in nineteenth-century sources, particularly in the manuscript censuses. There is no way of knowing, for example, if a person who reported himself as a teamster was more or less skilled than a person who reported herself as working in a cotton mill. A teamster might be considered semi-skilled, but a person working in a cotton mill might be unskilled, semi-skilled, or even skilled.[9] Without additional data it would be misleading to classify teamsters and cotton-mill workers into separate skill-level categories. On the other hand, ordering such occupations according to job specificity provides a descriptive framework which can be modified and refined as methods are developed to deal with the problem of skill-level for "unskilled" occupations.

One category below the unskilled categories has also been added--keeping house. Only women and girls reported such an occupation in 1870. As opposed to housekeepers or domestic servants who worked in someone else's home for a wage, people who reported themselves as keeping house were homemakers.[10] That is, they performed the domestic tasks

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[9]For example, in an 1875 report of the Massachusetts Bureau of the Statistics of Labor some mill occupations--spinner, slasher, weaver--were listed as skilled. Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Sixth Annual Report, 1875, p. 211. See also Dublin, "Women at Work," pp. 177-84.

[10]"Report of the Superintendent," Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, 1:xxxiii.

of cooking and cleaning and many times cared for children. Most of these people were housewives, a few were widows. Sometimes a daughter in a family or a single woman in a household reported herself as keeping house.

In the PSHP classification scheme females keeping house are found in the unskilled specified category. Classifying them in this manner camouflages the fact that their place of work was the home, and that they received no wages for their work. Since it was desirable to look at the role which women and girls who reported keeping house as their occupation played in family or household economies, placing them in a separate category was necessary.[11] Housekeepers and domestic servants, however, since they worked for wages, were classified in the unskilled specified category.

Although an analytical tool was uniquely developed for this study, the PSHP VERT system was not scuttled. The categories for both schemes have been coded onto the records of each individual in the French Canadian census sample of 1870. Retention of the PSHP system will permit comparisons to be made with the Philadelphia Social History Project. However, in the following sections the modified classification system has been used.[12]

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[11]The keeping house category appears last in the modified classification system, but the placement of this category is not based on hierarchical assumptions regarding the importance of this occupation in comparison with others.

[12]The modified classification scheme is presented

II

In the French-Canadian census sample for 1870 of 1448 individuals, a little more than half reported occupations outside the home.[13] Table 4 shows that 82 per cent of employed French Canadians were unskilled workers, 13 per cent were skilled workers, while only 4 per cent were in non-working-class occupations. Table 5 shows that 70 per cent of unskilled workers--those in the other unskilled category who reported worksite only--had jobs in manufacturing establishments. Twenty-three per cent worked as common laborers (unskilled unspecified category), while 5 per cent reported other specific occupations.[14]

The skilled class, 13 per cent of the French-Canadian workforce, encompassed 21 different occupations. But workers were not evenly represented in these crafts. Three occupations claimed 65 per cent of the total employed as skilled craftsmen: 36 individuals or 36 per cent were car-

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in appendix B which gives a complete listing of the 75 occupations in which French Canadians were employed according to the LFCPVERT scheme.

[13]All percentages in this chapter have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Reference to the "total French-Canadian workforce" means all those who reported jobs in the 1870 census.

[14]Recall that those who specify worksite only are classified as other unskilled; those whose work is unspecified, laborers, are classified as unskilled unspecified; those whose jobs are specifically described are classified as unskilled specified. Under other unskilled 12 of the total 453 or 2 per cent of all unskilled workers were not employed in manufacturing establishments. These are farm laborer (1), works in bake house (1), works at home (1), works in laundry (1), works in store (1), works on farm (6).

TABLE 4

DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN WORKFORCE ACCORDING TO OCCUPATIONAL CLASS

Occupational Class	No.	Per Cent of Total
Above skilled	32	4
Skilled	99	13
Unskilled	630	82
Other[a]	6	1
Total	767	100

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

[a]This class represents 5 who reported site of workplace only and 1 who was unclassifiable.

TABLE 5

DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN WORKFORCE

WITHIN UNSKILLED CLASS

Occupational Category	No.	Per Cent of Total
Unskilled specified	33	5
Unskilled unspecified	144	23
Other unskilled[a]		
Manufacturing	441	70
Non-manufacturing	12	2
Total	630	100

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

[a]The other unskilled category has been divided into two sub-categories to indicate the number and percentage of those working in manufacturing establishments and those who were not.

penters, 14 or 14 per cent were machinists, and 11 or 11 per cent were painters. The number of persons engaged in the remaining 18 skilled occupations ranged from 1 to 5 (see appendix B).

The above-skilled class, although small, 4 per cent of the total French-Canadian workforce, contained several occupational categories. The two largest groups were low white-collar and proprietary (see table 6). Eleven of the total 13 persons in the low white-collar category were clerks, 2 were mill overseers. There were 11 proprietors, only 2 of whom were shopkeepers; 9 were farmers. The remaining 9 persons in the above-skilled categories were divided into 3 groups: 3 professional, all physicians; 4 commercial, 3 traders, 1 dry goods dealer; and 1 para-professional, an inventor.

This overview of the occupational structure of the French-Canadian workforce establishes the working-class nature of the Lowell French-Canadian community in 1870. Ninety-five per cent of employed French Canadians had working-class occupations. Further, 8 of every 10 French Canadians were employed in manufacturing establishments. Interestingly enough, however, this picture of an overwhelmingly unskilled workforce is somewhat misleading. This is demonstrated by considering the occupational structure of men, women, and children separately.

Three-hundred and sixty-seven men over the age of

TABLE 6

DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN WORKFORCE

WITHIN ABOVE-SKILLED CLASS

Occupational Category	No.	Per Cent of Total
Professional	3	9
Commercial	4	13
Proprietary	11	34
Para-professional	1	3
Low white-collar	13	41
Total	32	100

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

15, 48 per cent of the French-Canadian workforce, reported occupations at the time they were enumerated for the census.[15] When occupations of men are compared with the total French-Canadian workforce according to the three-tiered class scheme of above-skilled, skilled, and unskilled, it is seen that men virtually monopolized the occupations in the above-skilled and skilled classes (see table 7). They were less likely to be in unskilled occupations: 38 per cent of all persons in unskilled occupations were men.

Table 8 shows that 59 per cent of men in unskilled occupations were common laborers (unskilled unspecified category), 35 per cent worked in manufacturing establishments (other unskilled category), while 3 per cent indicated other specific occupations.[16] Comparison of men in unskilled occupations with the total French-Canadian workforce in unskilled occupations reveals that while almost all common laborers were men, only about 2 of every 10 French Canadians engaged by manufacturing establishments were (see tables 8 and 5).[17]

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[15]Adult status begins at age 16. Seven additional adult men reported no occupation. These 7 plus the 367 who had occupations takes into account all adult males for the sample of 1448 individuals.

[16]Eight of the total 93 in other unskilled (3 per cent) were not working in mills or factories. Their occupations were farm laborer (1), works in bake house (1), works in printing office (1), works on farm (5). Thus, 85 or 35 per cent of men were employed in manufacturing.

[17]Only 85 of the total 441 workers employed in manufacturing establishments, or 19 per cent, were men.

TABLE 7

PROPORTION OF ADULT MALES IN FRENCH-CANADIAN WORKFORCE WITHIN EACH OCCUPATIONAL CLASS

Occupational Class	No. of Males	No. in Total Workforce	Per Cent of Workforce Male
Above skilled	28	32	91
Skilled	93	99	93
Unskilled	242	630	38
Other[a]	5	6	83

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

[a]This class represents 4 who reported site of workplace only and 1 who was unclassifiable.

TABLE 8

DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN ADULT MALES

WITHIN UNSKILLED CLASS

Occupational Category	No.	Per Cent of Total
Unskilled specified	8	3
Unskilled unspecified	141	59
Other unskilled[a]		
Manufacturing	85	35
Non-manufacturing	8	3
Total	242	100

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

[a]The other unskilled category has been divided into two sub-categories to indicate the number and percentage of those working in manufacturing establishments and those who were not.

Two-hundred and sixty-nine women over the age of 15, 35 per cent of the French-Canadian workforce, reported jobs outside the home in the 1870 census.[18] Table 9 provides a clear picture of the occupational position of French-Canadian women: almost all, 97 per cent, worked in unskilled jobs. This figure, impressive alone, becomes more striking when it is noted that 66 per cent of all men worked in unskilled jobs. Thirty-three per cent of men had occupations in either the skilled or above-skilled classes, while only a very small proportion of women, 2 per cent, were employed in the skilled or above-skilled classes (see tables 9 and 10).[19] Table 11 shows that the vast majority of women in the unskilled class, 90 per cent, had jobs in manufacturing establishments (other unskilled category).[20] The rest indicated other specific occupations.[21] Again, comparing women with men, while 90 per cent of women worked in manufacturing establishments, only 35 per cent of men did.

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[18]These 269 working women represent 57 per cent of all adult females in the sample which numbered 474. One-hundred eight-five women were keeping house, 39 per cent of the total women in the sample. Only 20 women, 4 per cent, did not report occupations.

[19]The 3 women in the above-skilled class were all in the low white-collar occupation of clerk. In the skilled class, 2 were dressmakers, 1 was a tailoress. The 1 per cent in the other class represents 1 woman who reported site or workplace only.

[20]Only 1 woman in the other unskilled category did not work in a manufacturing establishment. She worked in a laundry.

[21]Does housework (1), housekeeper (10), domestic servant (13).

TABLE 9

DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN ADULT FEMALES

ACCORDING TO OCCUPATIONAL CLASS

Occupational Class	No.	Per Cent of Total
Above skilled	3	1
Skilled	3	1
Unskilled	262	97
Other[a]	1	-
Total	269	99

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

[a]This class represents 1 who reported site only.

TABLE 10

DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN ADULT MALES

ACCORDING TO OCCUPATIONAL CLASS

Occupational Class	No.	Per Cent of Total
Above skilled	28	8
Skilled	93	25
Unskilled	242	66
Other[a]	5	1
Total	367	100

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

[a]This class represents 4 who reported site of workplace only and 1 who was unclassifiable.

TABLE 11

DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN ADULT FEMALES

WITHIN UNSKILLED CLASS

Occupational Category	No.	Per Cent of Total
Unskilled specified	24	9
Unskilled unspecified	-	-
Other unskilled[a]		
Manufacturing	237	90
Non-manufacturing	1	-
Total	262	99

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

[a]The other unskilled category has been divided into two sub-categories to indicate the number and percentage of those working in manufacturing establishments and those who were not.

One hundred and thirty-two children under the age of 16, 17 per cent of the French-Canadian workforce, were gainfully employed in 1870.[22] Only a minority of French-Canadian children above the age of ten in the census sample did not work outside the home. 67 per cent of all children in the age bracket 11 through 15 had jobs. Most working children were 14 or 15, some were 12 or 13, only a few were 11 or younger.[23]

Children had the same kinds of jobs as women. Ninety-six per cent held unskilled jobs, 3 per cent, skilled, and 1 per cent, above-skilled (see table 12).[24] In the unskilled class, as table 13 indicates, 95 per cent worked in mills or factories (other unskilled category).[25] Two per cent were boys employed as common laborers (un-skilled unspecified cateogry), while only 1 per cent indicated a specific occupation.[26]

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[22]Adult status in this study begins at age 16. Only 2 children (ages 9 and 10) under age 11 worked.

[23]Eighty-eight (67 per cent) were 14 or 15, 38 (29 per cent) were 12 or 13, and 6 (4 per cent) were 11 or less.

[24]The 1 per cent above-skilled figure is doubtful. It represents 1 boy, age 13, who reported farmer as his occupation. The 3 per cent in skilled included 4 children, 1 iron worker, 1 painter, 1 machinist apprentice and 1 seamstress. All but the seamstress were boys.

[25]The other 2 per cent represent 3 children employed in the following manner: works at home, works in store, works on farm.

[26]Domestic servant (1).

TABLE 12

DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN CHILDREN ACCORDING TO OCCUPATIONAL CLASS

Occupational Class	No.	Per Cent of Total
Above skilled	1	1
Skilled	4	3
Unskilled	127	96
Total	132	100

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

TABLE 13

DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN CHILDREN

WITHIN UNSKILLED CLASS

Occupational Category	No.	Per Cent of Total
Unskilled specified	1	1
Unskilled unspecified	3	2
Other unskilled[a]		
Manufacturing	120	95
Non-manufacturing	3	2
Total	127	100

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

[a]The other unskilled category has been divided into two sub-categories to indicate the number and percentage of those working in manufacturing establishments and those who were not.

The findings on the separate occupational distributions for men, women, and children in 1870 point to three important conclusions. First, French-Canadian men were much less likely than women or children to be employed in unskilled jobs; 66 per cent of men were unskilled workers compared with 97 per cent of women and 96 per cent of children. Second, within the general unskilled class, men were much less likely than women and children to be engaged in manufacturing establishments; 35 per cent of unskilled men workers were employed in manufacturing compared with 90 per cent of women and 95 per cent of children. A large proportion of men with unskilled jobs, 59 per cent, were common laborers. Third, even in the first years of settlement in Lowell, a large number of French-Canadian men were able to find work in skilled occupations: in 1870, one of every four working men was a craftsman. This occupational data on a sample of the French-Canadian workforce in 1870 has revealed two differentiated occupationsl structures: men on the one hand, women and children on the other. However, despite this differentiation, the larger picture of a predominantly unskilled workforce primarily engaged in manufacturing still holds true.

III

What kind of occupational structure did French Canadians encounter when they arrived in Lowell? Were choices for employment more varied than the data on French Canadians indicates? French Canadians were overwhelmingly working class in 1870, and they found jobs primarily in factories

or as common laborers. Did French Canadians form a special labor pool for such jobs or were most occupations in Lowell in these areas of employment at that time?

These questions, unfortunately, can only be imperfectly answered since a sample providing occupational data for the entire working population of Lowell in 1870 has not yet been collected from the manuscript census. However, some useful data on Lowell occupations in 1875 does exist.[27] Some general observations on the differences between French-Canadian occupational distribution (1870) and overall Lowell occupational distribution (1875) can, therefore, be made.

Lowell's major industry at that time was textiles.[28] In 1875 at least one-third of Lowell's employed population was engaged in occupations related to the production of cotton and woolen fabrics and machinery (see table 14). Many other people were employed in industrial work, too. Table 15 shows that in 1875 two-thirds of working people

[27] See appendix C, "Use of Occupational Data on Lowell from the Massachusetts State Census of 1875." Occupational distributions for 1875 and 1870 could not have been the same, but a general impression of differences between French Canadians and the overall population may still be gained. An additional qualifying comment, however, needs to be made. It should be recalled that the depression which began in 1873 was still affecting the economy in 1875. In Lowell the depression did not really affect jobs until the autumn of 1873. By 1875 the large factories were operating at near normal capacity, although smaller firms and businesses were still closed. See Twenty-ninth Report of the Ministry, p. 4; and Thirty-first Annual Report of the Ministry-at-Large in Lowell (Lowell, 1876), p. 5.

[28] See the report on Lowell's industries found in Statistical Information Relating to Certain Branches of Industry in Massachusetts, for the year Ending May 1, 1865 (Boston, 1866), prepared by Oliver Warner, Secretary of the Commonwealth, pp. 363-70.

TABLE 14

DISTRIBUTION OF LOWELL WORKERS IN TEXTILE OR MACHINE PRODUCTION, 1875

Occupation	No. Employed	Per Cent of Total Employed
Textile or machine-production	8,259	32
All other occupations	17,427	68
Total	25,686	100

SOURCE: Census of Massachusetts, 1875, 1:526-27. The figures are from the census, the percentages are mine.

TABLE 15

DISTRIBUTION OF LOWELL WORKFORCE, 1875

Occupational Category	No.	Per Cent of Total
Government and professional	710	3
Domestic and personal service[a]	2,767	11
Trade and transportation	2,410	9
Agriculture and fisheries	347	1
Manufacturing and mechanical industries	16,866	66
Indefinite[b]	2,586	10
Total	25,686	100

SOURCE: Census of Massachusetts, 1875, 1:466-67 and 526-27. The figures are from the census. The percentages are mine.

[a]Excludes housewives (8100).

[b]Includes mostly common laborers (2097).

were employed in occupations related to manufacturing and mechanical industries. Most of the rest were rather evenly distributed among three additional job categories, domestic and personal service (11 per cent), trade and transportation (9 per cent), and indefinite, chiefly common labor (10 per cent). Only 3 per cent were working in government or professions and 1 per cent in agriculture and fisheries.

Like many other Lowell citizens most French Canadians, 72 per cent, had jobs in manufacturing or mechanical industries (see table 16). This category included manufacturers and artisan-tradesmen as well as factory workers and common laborers. French Canadians did not as a rule enjoy entry into these high-status occupations at this time. They held instead working-class jobs either as common laborers or as factory workers. Comparison of tables 15 and 16 indicate that French Canadians were twice as likely to have jobs as common laborers.[29] Thus, while 73 per cent of Lowell's population in 1875 was employed either in manufacturing-industrial pursuits or as laborers, 91 per cent of French Canadians were so employed.[30] French Canadians were not securing many jobs in government or the professions, trade or transportation, agriculture or fisheries. Only a smattering of French Canadians worked in domestic and personal service.

The majority of Lowell's employed population was en-

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[29]See specifically note b, table 15, and note b, table 16; 144 French Canadians or 19 per cent were common laborers, while 2,097 Lowellians or 10 per cent were.

[30]Seventy-three per cent is arrived at by adding the 16,866 in manufacturing and mechanical industries to the 2087 laborers in indefinite and then dividing this total by 25,868.

TABLE 16

DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN WORKFORCE, 1870

Occupational Category	No.	Per Cent, of Total
Government and professional	4	1
Domestic and personal service	30	4
Trade and transportation	18	2
Agriculture and fisheries	18	2
Manufacturing and mechanical industries	548	72
Indefinite[a]	144	19
Total	762	100

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample, in conjunction with Census of Massachusetts, 1875, 1:526-27.

[a]Includes common laborers only.

gaged in working-class occupations related to manufacturing.[31] The French Canadians followed this pattern, too. However, while 32 percent of Lowell people were employed in textile or machine production, 58 per cent of French Canadians were (see tables 14 and 17). Interestingly, 70 per cent of these French-Canadian workers were female while 58 per cent of all Lowell workers were.[32] Thus, French-Canadian working-class individuals were more likely than other working-class individuals in Lowell to be industrial workers. Like the Irish before them, French Canadians in 1870, especially the women and children, were starting at the bottom of the heap.

IV

Since work with the 1880 Lowell manuscript census has not yet been undertaken, it is difficult to ascertain the occupational distribution of French Canadians at a later date. However, observations of a Lowell French Canadian in 1881 provide some clues. Constable J.H. Guillet pointed out that in that year 228 French-Canadian men had non-working-class occupations: there were 134 businessmen, 71 clerks, 10 physicians, 7 public service employ-

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[31]Here only working-class occupations have been considered; manufacturers and artisan-tradesmen have been excluded.

[32]In 1870, 305 French-Canadian females out of a total of 441 worked in textile or machine production. In 1875, 4,822 Lowell females out of a total of 8,259 worked in textile or machine production. Census of Massachusetts, 1875, 1:526-27; and French-Canadian Census Sample, 1870.

TABLE 17

DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN WORKERS IN TEXTILE OR MACHINE PRODUCTION, 1870

Occupation	No. Employed	Per Cent of Total Employed
Textile or machine production	441	58
All other occupations	321	42
Total	762	100

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample, in conjunction with Census of Massachusetts, 1875, 1:526-27.

ees, and 6 overseers.[33] If it is assumed that the proportion of adult males in the total French-Canadian population of 11,000 in 1881 was the same as that in 1870, then it can be inferred that French Canadians as a group were still predominantly working class: in 1881 only 6 per cent of all adult males had occupations in the above-skilled category; in 1870 the percentage had been 8 per cent (see table 10).[34] Unfortunately, Guillet does not give information on occupational distribution within the working-class in 1881.

Estimating the extent of geographic and occupational mobility over the decade of the 1870s is also problematic, as it is not known how many French Canadians from the 1870 census sample still resided in Lowell in 1880. However, two sources exist which supply some answers. Marriage and birth records show that persistence in Lowell for one group in the French-Canadian population--young people marrying for the first time and beginning families--

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[33]Massachusetts, Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, pp. 43-44.

[34]There were 474 French-Canadian adult men in the 1870 census sample which represents 33 per cent of the total census sample of 1448 individuals. In 1881, if the same proportion is used, 3630 French Canadians were adult males (3630 is 33 per cent of 11,000). This inference is used here because more accurate data is not yet available. It is possible of course that the proportion of adult males in the French-Canadian population of 1881 was higher or lower. But since Guillet described the French-Canadian population as being composed of both "grown up" families and young people in this year, an observation which is not that dissimilar to the description of the French-Canadian population of 1870 found in chapter 5 of this dissertation, it is hoped that this inference is not an irresponsible one.

was not unusual.[35] Furthermore, young fathers who remained in Lowell for at least several years had almost a 50 per cent chance of experiencing upward job mobility.

Investigation of 175 French-Canadian marriage records for the years 1869, 1871, 1873, and 1875, in conjunction with birth records, reveals that 63 women gave birth to one or more children in the ten-year period following their marriages.[36] Thus, 36 per cent of French-Canadian couples remained in Lowell for at least a few years after their marriages. The proportion of persisters in this group is probably higher since some couples who remained childless could have stayed on in Lowell, and some couples could have failed to register their children's births.

Eighteen of these couples had three or more children within ten years. Because birth records give the occupation of the father, it is possible to profile the career patterns of the heads of these eighteen persisting French-Canadian families in Lowell. This procedure reveals two important findings. First, these men as a group had better jobs than French-Canadian men in general when they married: less than

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[35] Massachusetts birth records provide the following information: date of birth, name of child, sex, place of birth, names of parents, residence of parents, occupation of father, birthplace of father, birthplace of mother.

[36] In this sample both bride and groom had to be identified as French-Canadian by virtue of their surnames and both had to be marrying for the first time. The mean age of grooms was 23, the mean age of brides, 21. The couple had to be married in the French-Canadian parish church, St. Joseph's.

half (8) were unskilled workers when they got married, 8 were skilled workers, 1 was a low-white collar employee (a clerk), and 1 was a proprietor of a grocery store. Second, by the end of the ten-year period following the marriages of each of these men, although 9 had remained in the same kind of job, 8 had experienced upward job mobility, while only 1 had experienced downward job mobility--from skilled to unskilled work.[37]

The group of 9 who remained in the same occupational categories are classified as follows:

Skilled (4)
Unskilled (3)
Above-skilled (2--low-white collar and proprietary)

The group of 8 who moved upward occupationally may be classified in the following way:

Unskilled to skilled (4)
Skilled to above-skilled (3--public service employee, low-white collar, proprietary)
Unskilled to above-skilled (1--low-white collar)

Seven of these 8 men moved up one occupational class, while 1 moved up two occupational classes, from unskilled to above-skilled.

Analysis of marriage and birth records has shown that one-third of young married couples remained in Lowell for at least a year or two after their marriages awaiting the birth of their first child. Some couples remained in Lowell longer. As these couples settled into Lowell and as additional chil-

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[37]This man was a miner in 1871 and a laborer at the time of the birth of four of his children between 1872 and 1879.

dren were born, fathers often experienced significant upward job mobility, from one occupational class to another.

These findings on persistence and career patterns for young fathers are provisional. It will be important to discover what pattern emerges when linkage between the 1870 and 1880 census has been completed. But in the meantime it does appear that young French Canadians who were establishing roots in this period were sometimes in a position to take advantage of the limited opportunities for upward job mobility which existed in Lowell. There were skilled jobs in the textile factories, especially for men, and demand for the work of craftsmen like carpentry and blacksmithing existed outside the mills, as French-Canadian men, even in 1870, realized. Positions could also be found in clerical work or in public service. Individuals with some capital could establish themselves in small-scale proprietary service ventures in dry goods, groceries and tobacco.

French-Canadian immigrants to Lowell came from a society whose occupational structure was somewhat diversified despite the fact that agriculture was the basis of Quebec's economy and social structure. That is, not all immigrants had been habitants. Even if they had earned their livelihoods as farmers at home, many doubtless had expectations as well as the qualifications and experience necessary to secure work in skilled occupations. Habitants were often skilled carpen-

ters, sawyers, or blacksmiths.[38] Given the structure of the Quebec French-Canadian lay elite at this time, some immigrants must have wished to follow this model, to become businessmen or professionals.

The finding that some French Canadians, like the young fathers discussed above, could improve their job status if they remained in Lowell for several years reinforces the thesis put forward by other scholars that geographic stability was related to upward occupational mobility.[39] It is very likely that only French-Canadians who stayed in Lowell for a number of years were able to move from unskilled to skilled or from skilled to above-skilled occupations. Those who remained only a short time--which might very well describe the majority of French-Canadian immigrants to Lowell in the 1870s--would have had working-class jobs, largely unskilled, and their lives at a material level would not have been easy.

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[38]This characteristic of the habitant is well described in Ringuet, Thirty Acres; Hémon, Maria Chaptelaine; and Ducharme, Delusson Family.

[39]See Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress; Clyde Griffen, "Workers Divided: The Effect of Craft and Ethnic Differences in Poughkeepsie, New York, 1850-1880," in Nineteenth-Century Cities, ed. by Stephan Thernstrom and Richard Sennett (New Haven, 1969):49-97; and Stephan Thernstrom and Peter R. Knights, "Men in Motion: Some Data and Speculations about Urban Population Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America," The Journal of Interdisciplinary History 1 (Autumn, 1970):7-35.

CHAPTER V

THE SETTLING-IN PROCESS

> The population was so big [in Little Canada] that the blocks were real close. But all families got along beautiful and we were all French people. . . . Everybody helped everybody, which is not done nowadays like it was then, but, people that had the money--if one needed help that means they would get together and they would come over and help.[1]

French Canadians who came to Lowell in the 1870s and 1880s had to accommodate themselves to the urban, industrial environment they had chosen as their new home. Especially for those who had just left farms in Quebec the transition could not have been easy. They had to find jobs for which they had had little or no training. They had to secure housing in an unfamiliar urban setting. They had to raise families whose members were dispersed in factories during the working day. Furthermore, probably few of them spoke any English. Immigrants to Lowell who came from towns in Quebec or had lived elsewhere in New England no doubt had less difficulty adjusting. Still, most French Canadians, at best a generation removed from a very different society and culture, faced

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[1] Mrs. Cecil Levasseur, "Little Canada," oral interview, Lowell, May 3, 1975, typewritten transcript, p. 5.

the task of securing their livelihoods and shaping their lives under potentially disruptive conditions.

I

Especially in the early years, French Canadians were often "invited" to centers like Lowell by recruiting agents, men hired by textile corporations to scour Quebec for factory hands. These agents were in many cases French Canadians themselves. In addition to convincing people to migrate, agents frequently made travel arrangements, introduced newcomers to already settled immigrants, and helped them to find temporary lodgings. In Lowell, Samuel P. Marin, destined to become one of the French-Canadian community's leading citizens, got his start as a recuiting agent in 1865. He performed his job effectively:

> There were but few French Canadians here prior to 1865, when Mr. S. P. Marin was employed by some of the manufacturing companies to visit his native Province of Quebec, to present to the people the advantages to be derived from "a change of base," as well as of occupation, and to induce them to remove with their families from the Valley of the St. Lawrence to the Valley of the Merrimack. They have since come in greater numbers than any other class of immigrants, and have effected a permanent foothold here, and the cry is, "Still they come."[2]

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[2]Cowley, "Foreign Colonies," p. 175; United States, Congress, Senate, Report on the Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States, vol. 9: History of Women in Industry in the United States, Senate Doc 645, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1910, p. 83; and Massachusetts, Senate, Joint Special Committee Report Relating to "The Immigration of Young Women to the West," Senate Doc 156, 1865, pp. 35-41. In the latter two sources the role of the textile corporation recruit-

French Canadians frequently heard about towns like Lowell from neighbors, friends, and relatives, people who had already lived and worked in or visited New England. For instance, the head of one family stated that he and his wife and children went to Lowell in the 1880s on the advice of friends and their local parish priest.[3] Mrs. Cecil Levasseur, born in Lowell in 1908 and interviewed in 1975, remembered that families already established in Lowell often encouraged their kin back in Quebec to migrate to Lowell:

> Interviewer: Did a lot of people come down from Canada [upon the recommendation of] their relatives that were living here? In other words, relatives would write and say "there's money down here?"
>
> Mrs. Levasseur: That's right. They would come in and go to work in the mills because there was a lot of need for people in the mills. So, they'd write to their families in Canada and they'd come in and go to work in the mills with them.[4]

In the 1850s and 1860s it was not uncommon for French Canadians to travel to Lowell in carts or wagons. One woman related a story, part of her family-history mythology, of how her cousin had come to Lowell in the nineteenth century:

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ing agent in the immediate post-Civil War era is discussed in relation to Lowell and other New England manufacturing towns.

[3]Félix Albert, Histoire d'un enfant pauvre (Nashua, New Hampshire, 1909), pp. 51, 57-58.

[4]Levasseur, "Little Canada," p. 10. For a similar but more colorful rendition of this practice see Louis Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine (Toronto, 1938), p. 62.

> Napoléon Lord lived in St. Hilaire, where he was the town baker. When his clients started leaving him to go to the States, 'Poléon thought he might as well follow. He hitched his chestnut mare to his baker's cart and, telling his wife and children that he would be back for them as soon as he was settled, set out with some of the family belongings to find a new home.[5]

After a five-week journey to Lowell, Napoleon secured temporary work. But because he "had the soul of a baker," he went back to his trade as soon as he had amassed a little savings. "Then began another long trek, back to Canada this time, to fetch his family . . . . With the coming of his family and the opening of his bakery, 'Poléon sank into the oblivion of the small merchant."[6]

By the post-Civil War era, few French Canadians made the trip to Lowell in a baker's cart. They took the train. Louis Biron, the son of a canadien, recaptured his sense of the French-Canadian immigrant arrival scene in the nineteenth century:

> I can remember the old days. We used to see the Canadians arrive at the railroad station. There would be the father, with a burlap bag on his shoulder containing the spare clothes. His wife would walk beside him carrying some household article, like a clock. Then children would follow, each one carrying something. They would walk into town, and if they hadn't seen anyone they knew would stop each person they met to find out where such and such a one lived whom they had known in Canada. Generally they came from the same town as those already here. When they would find the house they were looking for, they would spend a few nights

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[5]Ducharme, Shadow of the Trees, pp. 47-48.

[6]Ibid., p. 48.

> there, until the father and the oldest children found work. Then they would take an apartment of their own.[7]

In 1975 Father Armand Morrisette of Lowell confirmed Biron's story: "Every week there were some arrivals at the depot, the old depot. They would come in by the hundreds . . ."[8] Félix Albert and his wife and nine children were part of this influx. Albert described his arrival experience:

> Upon arrival at the train station, I met a Mr. Jules Tremblay. He offered to let me stay with him for a few days while I looked for accommodations. He, like me, had a large family, and we made a jolly group in one lodging. We spent a few days with Mr. Tremblay. Then we found a home. . .[9]

Like the Lord family, the Alberts, who settled in Lowell in 1887, became permanent residents.

II

The descriptions of the French-Canadian arrival experience leave the impression that most immigrants coming to Lowell in the nineteenth century were members of a cohesive family circle. Even if some wives remained at home temporarily with their children, they followed their husbands down to Lowell as soon as it was economically feasible to do so. This impression is reinforced in Franco-American novels such as The Delusson

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[7]Quoted in ibid., pp. 44-45.

[8]Father Armand Morrisette, oral interview, Lowell, May 7, 1975, typewritten transcript, p. 3.

[9]Albert, Histoire, p. 58. My translation.

Family. Novels from the Canadian side of the border, however, such as Thirty Acres and Maria Chapdelaine, stress the migration down to New England of single people, particularly of single men.[10] A Quebec government report found that both patterns existed: emigrants were either young men "who, having neither expectations from their families, nor means to settle on Crown lands, leave home to seek fortune elsewhere," or were "poor farmers with large families, who, when their farms are sold to pay their debts, go to hide their wretchedness, and gain a livelihood for themselves and their children in the factories of our neighbors." Families with large numbers of daughters who could become mill operatives were especially prone to emigrate.[11] In all of these sources it is taken for granted that if a woman emigrated, she did so as a family member, usually as a wife or daughter, sometimes as a mother-in-law, a sister, or a cousin.

Were most immigrants to Lowell arriving in family groups, as the evidence thus far indicates? How numerous a group were unmarried young people in the French-Canadian population? In this latter group, were only single

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[10] Jacques Ducharme, The Delusson Family (New York, 1939); Ringuet, Thirty Acres (Toronto, 1940); and Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine.

[11] Quebec, Legislative Assembly, Report on Agriculture, Immigration and Colonization, 1867-68, App. 12, not paginated.

men leaving Quebec, or were single women emigrating at this time also? A statement by French-Canadian J. H. Guillet, a Lowell constable, indicates that most French Canadians were probably members of families in 1881: "A large part of the French population is composed of grown-up families recently arrived in Lowell." But in addition to families Guillet noted that many "unmarried" young men and women had also settled in Lowell.[12]

The census of 1870 does not indicate explicit family relationships. But it does contain enough information to make inferences of some family and kin relationships.[13] The findings reveal that the pattern of migration which Guillet described in 1881--families and young, unmarried people--was already established in 1870. Almost three-quarters of the French Canadians identified from the census were members of nuclear families which were almost always headed by two parents.[14] Another 16 per cent, mostly young, single people, lived with one or more of their relations. The remaining group, 10 per

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[12]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 43.

[13]I explain in appendix D my method for identifying nuclear families, married couples without children, kin clusters, and single people living without kin.

[14]Only a handful of families had one parent. There were 171 two-parent nuclear families in my sample and only 15 one-parent nuclear families, 11 female-headed and 4 male-headed.

cent, cannot be identified as living with relatives; most were young, and it is likely that many were also single.

Whether French Canadians came to Lowell with family or relations, as was usually the case, or more infrequently on their own, with few or no friends or acquaintances, they all faced the same immediate problem: they needed a home. Since most were members of two-parent nuclear families, the size and structure of the households they established will be considered first. The household arrangements for French Canadians who were not members of nuclear families will then be surveyed.

Louis Biron and Félix Albert's reminiscences stress that French-Canadian families generally sought private lodgings--as opposed to commercial boarding-house lodgings--after a brief stay with others who were usually but not always friends or relations from home. Examination of the size and composition of households containing French-Canadian nuclear families reveals that the pattern of lodging described by Biron and Albert existed in 1870. Of the total 171 two-parent nuclear families in the 1870 census sample, all but 14 lived in private households of less than 15 people with a mean household size of 6.8 and a median size of 6.6.[15] The overall household size in

[15]The mean French-Canadian family household size

Lowell was much smaller; in 1875, the mean household size was 4.1.[16] The relatively large size of the French-Canadian household might have been partly the result of larger families. The presence of non-nuclear family members in many homes might also have been a contributing factor. Generally a nuclear family did not share its home with another nuclear family, but its door was frequently open

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was larger than the mean household size in other mid-century towns and cities for which statistics are available. For instance in Hamilton, Ontario, the mean household size in 1861 was 5.3; in Preston, Lancashire, England, in 1851 it was 5.4. See Michael Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1975), p. 221. It is not always clear which residences were private and which were commercial boarding houses in 1870 in Lowell. But a listing exists for some boarding houses in the 1870 Lowell City Directory. Sight inspection of these households in the manuscript census reveals that boarding houses, even corporation-owned ones, sometimes had as few as 15 or 16 residents. All households of less than 15 residents in the French-Canadian census sample have the characteristics of private homes, whether or not apparent boarders are present, hence, the distinction between private homes and commercial boarding houses.

[16]The overall mean Lowell household size appears quite low in contrast with those in Hamilton or Preston also (see footnote 15, above). The 1875 Massachusetts state census provides data on family size, which actually means household size, that is, the number of persons living together in one apartment, private house, or boarding house. Unlike the aggregate United States census of 1870, the 1875 state census gives the number of people in households in 16 categories, households of one, two, three, and so forth, down to a last category, "16 or more." I was able, therefore, to compute the mean and median for all households with less than fifteen members. Census of Massachusetts, 1875, 1:34-35.

to others: in close to a third of these households at least one additional person was present.[17] This finding is consistent with studies dealing with household structure in some cities, towns, and rural areas in America and Canada; in the second half of the nineteenth century one-fifth to one-third of all nuclear families shared their residences with one or more individuals who were not members of the immediate nuclear family. Sometimes the non-nuclear family resident or residents were relatives, but often they were boarders; less frequently, especially in rural areas, they were servants, usually farm hands.[18]

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[17]Researchers are discovering that the majority of households in many different areas of the world have been predominantly nuclear in composition in the past--for as far back as records exist with which to study this phenomenon. But non-nuclear family residents have frequently been present. See Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, Household and Family in Past Time (Cambridge, England, 1972); and two articles by Lutz K. Berkner, "Rural Family Organization in Europe: A Problem in Comparative History," Peasant Studies Newsletter 1 (October, 1972):145-56; and "The Use and Misuse of Census Data for the Historical Analysis of Family Structure," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 5 (Spring, 1975): 721-38. The second article by Berkner is a valuable critique of the methodology used by Laslett and Wall. On the United States specifically, see Philip J. Greven, Jr., Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts, (Ithaca, New York, 1970; Cornell Paperbacks, 1977); Richard Sennett, Families against the City: Middle Class Homes of Industrial Chicago, 1872-1890 (New York, 1970; Vintage Books, 1974); Tamara Hareven, ed., Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 1700-1930 (New York; New Viewpoints, 1977); and Susan E. Bloomberg, et al., "A Census Probe into Nineteenth-Century Family History; South Michigan, 1850-1880," Journal of Social History 5 (1971):26-45. On Ontario, Canada, see Katz, People of Hamilton.

[18]See John Modell and Tamara K. Hareven,

Although it is not possible to determine definitively whether non-nuclear family residents in French-Canadian family households were relatives, friends, boarders, or servants, some inferences can be made from the available data. The relatively large size of French-Canadian households might have been partly the result of larger families. The presence of non-nuclear family members in some homes might also have been a contributing factor. Census enumerators were given specific instructions to list "other inmates, lodgers and boarders, laborers, domestics, and servants" after the nuclear family.[19] The class structure of the French-Canadian populace in Lowell in 1870 makes it unlikely that many French-Canadian homes contained domestics or servants. But some doubtless gave shelter to relatives. For instance, a handful of apparently single, older (age 55 or more), unemployed women with French-Canadian surnames are listed towards the end of households. Those with the same surname might have been the mothers of the household heads, while those with other names could very well have been mothers-in-law or even maiden aunts. It

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"Urbanization and the Malleable Household: An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families," in Family and Kin, ed. by Hareven, pp. 164-86; Bloomberg, et al, "Census Probe;" and Katz, People of Hamilton. Bettina Bradbury of the Concordia History Department, Montreal, is at present studying family structure and household composition in Montreal in 1871. Some of her preliminary findings will appear shortly in article form. Bradbury's impression at this point in her research is that non-nuclear family residents were often present in the homes of French-Canadian families.

[19]Wright, History of the Census, p. 151.

seems improbable that unattached women of this age would have migrated to Lowell alone. In other cases young people, who sometimes shared the same surname with others, are listed at the end of a household containing a French-Canadian family. A number of these people could have been relatives of the household head, even if they did not always have the same surname as the household head. Others were perhaps friends or acquaintances who needed a roof over their heads for a few days while they, like the Albert family at a later date, sought permanent lodgings of their own. Some could have been strangers. Most of these "non-family" residents were French-Canadian or Canadian. Some of the latter were probably French Canadian but surname ambiguity makes positive identification of them as French Canadians impossible. Twenty--one in six--were native Americans.

Residence sharing might have been largely indicative of a temporary assistance custom or it could have represented the more formalized institution of taking in boarders which was common in this era.[20] Biron and Albert's stories stress temporary assistance. The hospitality Biron remembered friends sharing, however, differed from the help Albert described when he and his family first arrived in Lowell. For the Alberts were not aware that

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[20]Modell and Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household," in Family and Kin, ed. by Hareven, pp. 164-86.

any relatives or friends from Quebec resided in Lowell. Yet at the train station a fellow countryman, apparently a stranger to the Alberts, offered his home to them. Was this a spontaneous act of kindness or were there ulterior motives to this kind of assistance? In the novel The Delusson Family the father was persuaded to come to Holyoke, Massachusetts, by an acquaintance from his home town who was a paid recruiting agent. He lodged a few days with the agent's family while looking for a permanent flat for himself and his family who joined him later.[21] This sort of temporary residence, part of the recruitment process, had a business aspect.

The service the Holyoke agent provided the Delusson family and that provided the Albert family by a stranger probably were qualitatively different, the first case having more to do with business, the second, with simple kindness. It is possible that the man who met the Alberts at the train station gave Albert the idea that temporary assistance could be turned into a profitable business. For once he had established himself and his family in Lowell Albert became, in the course of time, an "assistance" businessman. First he became a landlord: he built several tenement buildings. Next Albert bought a hack and became a licensed carter. Then he purchased used household items

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[21]Ducharme, Delusson Family.

and furniture. Finally he converted the ground floor of one of his tenements into a store.[22] These projects were accomplished gradually. During this time Albert became known in the French-Canadian community as "l'habitant." When French Canadians first arrived in Lowell at the train depot from Quebec they heard about Albert. According to Albert:

> Several people with whom I had done business returned home, and when some of their acquaintances came to Lowell, these people told them, if you go to Lowell ask for l'habitant. He is a man with whom one can do business; it is very easy to arrange things with him.[23]

Eventually Albert went in person to the railroad station to meet his "clients." Albert was not one to underestimate his importance for French-Canadian newcomers to Lowell:

> When people arrived from Canada I went to meet them at the train station. I sold them furniture and I lodged them in my tenements. When I did not have any vacancies, I knew where there were some and I directed people there. In this way the name of l'habitant became well known.[24]

Albert's business activities represent an extension of the assistance custom and do not bear directly upon an understanding of the composition of French-Canadian family

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[22] Albert, Histoire, p. 68 passim.

[23] Ibid., p. 70. My translation. Albert's activities resemble in some respects the padrone system of Italian immigrant communities. See Thomas Kessner, The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City 1880-1915 (New York, 1977), pp. 40, 55, 58, 70, 167.

[24] Albert, Histoire, p. 71. My translation.

households in 1870. He rented apartments to new immigrants; he did not invite them into his home. Yet when Albert's story in Lowell begins it is with the initial assistance tradition. His experience, taken along with the stories of other immigrants, makes some generalizations about assistance and its relation to household composition possible. Certainly some of the French Canadians listed towards the end of French-Canadian households in 1870 were, as Biron recalled, temporarily residing with friends until they found their own lodgings. Others probably, like the fictional Delusson family, also temporary residents for a time, were in homes where they paid boarding fees or had some kind of business arrangement with the household head. Still others, however, must have been permanent lodgers.

Most new immigrant arrivals, especially individuals who were not part of a nuclear family, would not have had the financial ability immediately to set up their own households. Surrounded by people who did not speak their language, they probably found the prospect of living with people who shared their language and cultural heritage attractive. Single people coming into Montreal in the 1880's from the countryside in search of employment often lodged with French-Canadian families.[25] This evidence

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[25]Susan Trofimenkoff, "One Hundred and Two Muffled Voices: Canada's Industrial Women in the 1880s," Atlantis 3 (Fall, 1977), p. 72.

adds support to the idea that boarding or taking in boarders was an accepted practice among Lowell French Canadians. It is also noteworthy that Americans and English Canadians were found in some French-Canadian households.[26] Most of these individuals must have been strangers, and, hence, permanent boarders. It appears safe to conclude, then, that while some French-Canadian family households had temporary guests and boarders, others had permanent boarders. Which pattern predominated? Unfortunately this question cannot be answered with the information at hand. There is some evidence, however, that taking in boarders was a fairly established custom by 1880, when a state board of health report linked the practice of taking in boarders to overcrowding in French-Canadian tenements located in the area called Little Canada.[27] Use of the 1880 manuscript census, which provided each person's relationship to the household head, will help to clarify this issue.

Most French Canadians who lived in Lowell in 1870 were members of a nuclear family. A significant minority--26 per cent--were not. Most of this latter group lived in private residences with French-Canadian nuclear families. But those who did not also usually chose to live with other

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[26]These are probably English Canadians only by virtue of English surnames.

[27]Massachusetts, State Board of Health, Annual Report, 1880, Supplement, p. 126.

French Canadians, and they preferred private residences to commercial boarding establishments. Some, in the company of one or more relatives, lived in homes headed either by a young French-Canadian couple (without children) or by a French-Canadian widow or widower who had children. Others appear to have been boarders in households headed by single French-Canadian adults. Sometimes, too, French Canadians, usually single people, resided in homes headed by English Canadians or native Americans. No French Canadians lodged in Irish-headed households.[28]

Commercial boarding houses, in most cases those owned by textile corporations, failed to attract many French Canadians. They were not set up to accommodate families. In Lowell's early days corporation boarding establishments housed single American farm women who worked in the mills.[29] Later a few boarding houses were established for single men who worked at the more skilled occupations in the factories. Some tenement houses, called "small boarding houses," were also built to rent to skilled male workers with families. As the mill work force changed from one composed primarily of native American single women to one composed mainly of Irish and French-Canadian women and

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[28]The number of private households with French-Canadian residents where a two-parent nuclear family was not present was 59. The ethnicity of household heads was: French Canadian, 24; Canadian, 20; native American, 14; and English, 1.

[29]See chapter 2.

children who lived with their families, the boarding-house system became increasingly impractical from the point of view of the corporations. Irish and French-Canadian families could not easily be housed in buildings which were designed as dormitories for single people. Furthermore, the textile corporations by the 1850s and 1860s no longer felt the obligation or the need to subsidize wages with low-cost housing facilities. Immigrant workers in this period, unlike native-American workers in an earlier era, accepted low wages without subsidiary benefits. Corporation managers also had no desire to deal with the complaints of boarding-house keepers when squabbles broke out among different ethnic groups housed under the same roof.[30]

By 1870 a number of buildings had been torn down or sold. Overcrowding was common in many of the houses which remained. They generally still catered to single people, although married couples were also sometimes accepted. It was also not unusual by this date for both sexes to be lodged in the same establishment. Formerly only people in the employ of the mills had lived in corporation boarding houses. In 1870 a few people in other working class pursuits occasionally boarded in corporation buildings.[31]

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[30] Brown, "Decline and Fall," in Cotton was King, ed. by Eno, p. 142; and Kenngott, Record of a City, pp. 45-49.

[31] Lowell Manuscript Census Returns, 1870 passim.

Only 69 French Canadians from the 1870 census sample lived in either corporation or privately-run boarding houses.[32] Almost all of these French Canadians worked in factories, and with the exception of one married couple, all were single. Most, too, 87 per cent, were women with a mean age of 27.

The presence within the French-Canadian population of a group of single women living in boarding houses is intriguing. Many were no longer in their first youth. They were working and living on their own, surrounded for the most part by strangers. A few of these women shared the same surname and lived together in the same house; they were doubtless relatives, sisters or perhaps cousins. But apparently most were not living with relations. Perhaps, like many of the American farm girls who preceded them or like some Italian women immigrants of a slightly later era, these French-Canadian women came to Lowell with a plan to work hard, save money, and return as soon as possible to their homeland. Extra earnings could have helped unmortgage a family farm or provide for a dowry.[33]

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[32]The number of establishments was 27, 20 of which were corporation owned. The corporation boarding houses were larger than the privately owned establishments. The former lodged from 15 to 84 individuals (mean, 37); the latter from 17 to 40 individuals (mean, 30).

[33]Single Italian women coming to New York at a slightly later date sometimes worked for a temporary period in the United States in order to amass money for a dowry. Kessner, Golden Door, p. 31.

What happened to these women in the 1870s is a mystery. Unfortunately single women, except widows and those who were household heads, are not listed in city directories. Marriage records provide the maiden names (and ages) of brides. However, examination of these records fails to uncover any of the women in this group in the 1870s. Were these women transients who left Lowell either to return home or to go elsewhere in the states in search of work? At first this hypothesis seems logical, especially since a depression began in 1873. But although the mills operated at reduced time in the depression years, work was available. Perhaps, then, some of these women lived on in Lowell--as spinsters. A good number, 12, were already 30 years old or more in 1870. Very few French-Canadian women past the age of 21 got married in Lowell in the 1870s.[34] Linkage to the 1880 manuscript census in Lowell will uncover any unmarried women in this group who stayed. What happened to those who left can probably never be known.

The analysis of French-Canadian family and household structure at one point in time cannot show how often membership in residences changed, nor can it indicate how

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[34]Lowell Marriage Records, 1869, 1871, 1873, 1875, 1877, 1879. Twenty-one is the mean age for first marriages. The mean for second and subsequent marriages is 31 but only 10 French-Canadian women married for a second or subsequent time in these years.

life-cycle stages affected living arrangements. Nevertheless, the fact that three in every four French Canadians in the 1870 census sample lived in a nuclear family and that most of the rest--excepting the single woman group discussed above--boarded with families or lived with relatives or friends, points to the conclusion that French Canadians were utilizing the institution of the family, as they had in Quebec, as a primary base of social organization.[35] A broader family-kinship orientation seems to have influenced French Canadians, too. The practices of encouraging kin and friends to come to Lowell, temporary assistance, and to a lesser extent, taking in boarders, owed something to the French-Canadian familial outlook. A sense of obligation to friends or neighbors or compatriots from home also seems to have informed the activities of profit-minded recruiting agents and businessmen who earned their livings helping French Canadians immigrate to Lowell, find jobs, and secure lodgings.

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[35] Other scholars who look at nineteenth-century migration patterns of largely rural peoples into urban, industrial areas have reached similar conclusions in this regard. See Michael Anderson, Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire (Cambridge, England, 1971); Sennett, Families against the City; and Walkowitz, Worker City, Company Town. Walkowitz's research is particularly interesting because he deals with Cohoes, New York, a textile town which contained a large French-Canadian populace. His findings regarding nuclear families are similar to mine. In 1880, 75 per cent of the cotton workers in Cohoes "were part of two-parent families, if they lived with a family at all." (p. 112) Unfortunately, Walkowitz infers that "Canadian" means "French Canadian" in the 1880 census so some of his generalizations about French-Canadian families and workers are suspect.

Both maintenance of the nuclear family structure and commitment to values associated with this institution appear to have served as important support mechanisms for French Canadians in the settling-in process. In this, French Canadians shared much in common with other immigrant groups who came to America in family groups like Buffalo's Italians for whom the family was also an important organizing, stabilizing force.[36] Another institution, that of the ethnic neighborhood, often helped immigrants make the transition to living in a new society. French Canadians were also able to develop their own neighborhoods in Lowell in this decade.

III

General histories of Lowell refer to the development in this period of a residential area called Little Canada which was located just west of the Lawrence Company and the Suffolk and Tremont mills below the Great Bunt in the Merrimack River. These studies assert that most French Canadians coming to Lowell in the last three decades

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[36]See Virginia Yans McLaughlin, "Patterns of Work and Family Organization: Buffalo's Italians," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 2 (Autumn, 1971): 299-314.

of the nineteenth century settled in Little Canada. They also assume that Little Canada was a ghetto--a neighborhood for French Canadians only.[37] By 1880 the Massachusetts Board of Health referred to Little Canada as an exclusively French-Canadian neighborhood: Little Canada or "The Dump" was a district "covering considerable space, at the northern end of the city" which was "inhabited by French Canadians, many of whom work in the mills."[38] In 1881 an official of the Massachusetts Bureau of the Statistics of Labor assumed that housing conditions of Lowell French Canadians could be discussed solely in terms of Little Canada.[39] In the public mind French Canadians were already by this date ghettoized.

Recent works, especially those in the field of historical geography which investigate immigrant settlement patterns in American urban areas in the second half of the nineteenth century, point out that ghettoization was not always immediate. Nor was it necessarily inevitable. In the pre-1870 period it was common for immigrants

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[37]Coburn, History of Lowell, vol. 1, pp. 343-44; M. T. Parker, Lowell: A Study of Industrial Development (New York, 1940), pp. 86-88; and Mary H. Blewett, "Mills and Multitudes, p. 179; and Peter F. Blewett, "New People," in Cotton was King, ed. by Eno, pp. 194, 208-09.

[38]Massachusetts, State Board of Health, Annual Report, 1880, Supplement, p. 123.

[39]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 47.

to live in central areas of cities, but it was also common for them to locate in several sections of the downtown district. Nineteenth-century immigrants resided in central areas primarily because of job and transportation considerations. In the first years of settlement they usually found work as unskilled laborers or in manufacturing towns as factory hands. Immigrant children frequently went to work, too, especially in factory towns where the manufacturing establishments were usually centrally located. Horse-car trolley systems existed in many cities in this era, but they usually serviced only the central urban area, and they were not free. Residency on the outskirts of a town meant a walk of several miles to work, or perhaps, if trolleys were available, a car fare. Neither of these situations was attractive to immigrants, particularly immigrant families with working children. Moreover, immigrants did not generally have much choice of where to live in the central city. Housing facilities were inadequate. As we have already seen in the case of Lowell French Canadians, it was customary for older residents--relatives and friends--to help newcomers find housing in their own neighborhoods. For this reason, although immigrants could be scattered throughout the central part of a town or city, they could also be clustered in certain areas. Such clustering, however, should not be confused with ghetto life. For even when immigrants were clustered in certain areas they usually shared

this living space with people of other ethnic backgrounds. Ghettoization, if it occurred, came about gradually.[40]

Only one source exists which comments directly upon French-Canadian residence patterns before the development in the late 1870s and 1880s of Little Canada. Richard Santerre in his history of the French-Canadian parish of St. Joseph states that in the immediate post-Civil War years French Canadians resided in a several-block triangle area in the center of town just south of the old railroad depot, bordered on the east by the Acre, an old established Irish neighborhood, and on the west by Dutton Street (see map 1).[41] This area was conveniently and centrally located, close to both the St. Joseph Church and to the mills and factories which employed many French Canadians especially women and children. In order to test Santerre's thesis a group of French Canadians from the 1870 census sample--mostly male household (and family) heads--were linked to the 1870 Lowell City Direc-

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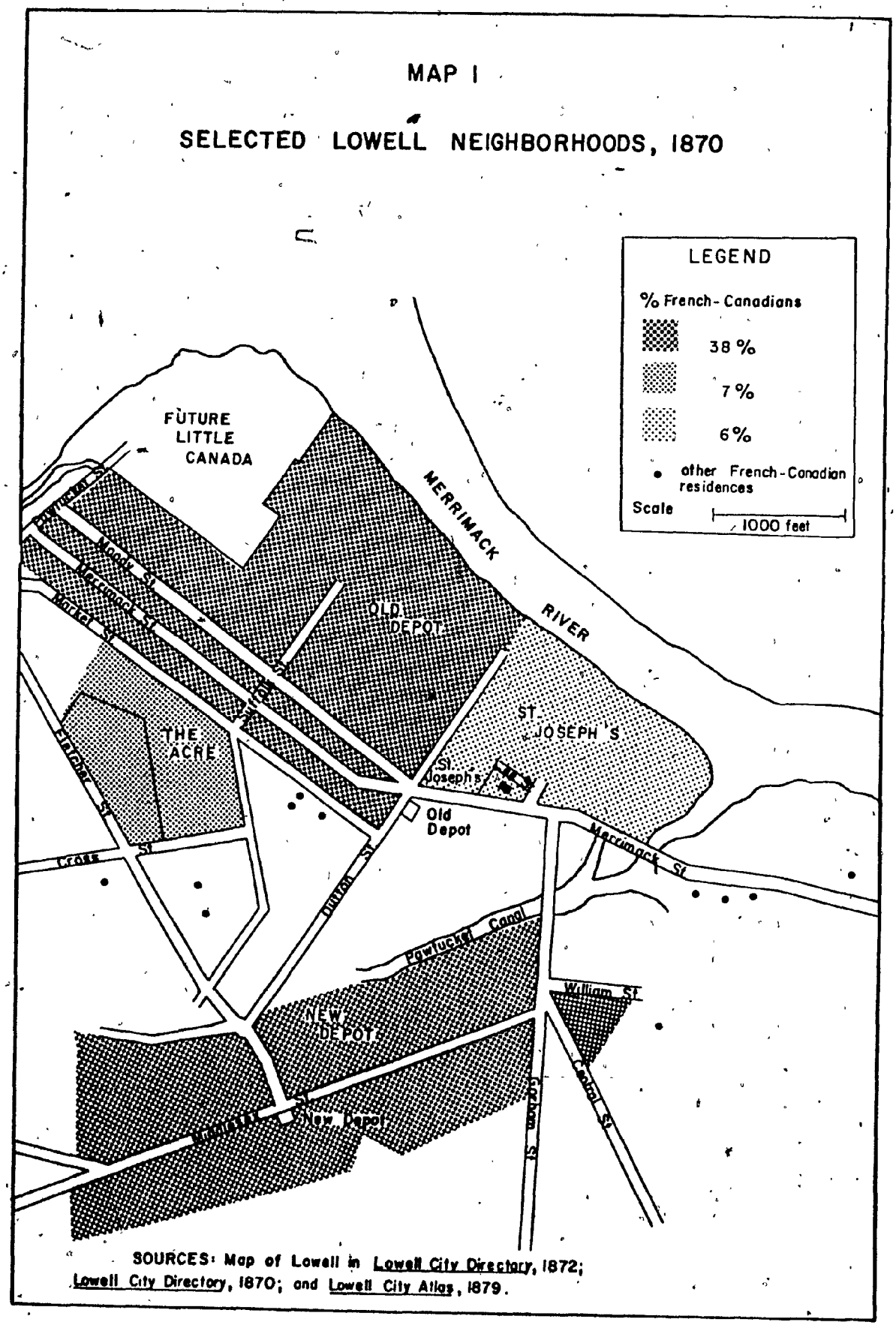
[40]See David Ward, Cities and Immigrants. A Geography of Change in Nineteenth Century America (New York, 1971); and more specifically David Ward, "Emergence of Central Immigrant Ghettoes in American Cities, 1840-1920," Association of American Geographers, Annals 58 (1968):343-59; see also Sam Bass Warner, Jr., Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1962).

[41]Santerre, Un peuple, p. 17.



SOURCES: Map of Lowell in Lowell City Directory, 1872; Lowell City Directory, 1870; and Lowell City Atlas, 1879.

tory which provides addresses.[42] Next a Lowell atlas was used to plot the residences of this group. This procedure revealed that for the most part French Canadians were not living in the area Santerre mentioned. As map 2 indicates, they were scattered widely throughout the central area of Lowell. At the same time they were concentrated in two areas (see map 1 and table 18) which were within walking distance of textile mills, lumber yards, and other small manufacturing establishments.

A large proportion of French Canadians were living in the central business district along the western sections of Merrimack and Market Streets (see map 1--Old Depot district). The old railway depot, which was still in use, was located in this section of town on Merrimack Street. Many of the textile mills in which French Canadians found employment, such as the Lawrence and Suffolk-Tremont mills, were nearby.[43] Businesses and shops--dry goods stores, apothecaries, banks, bakeries, cigar dealers--lined both Merrimack and Market Streets. A horse-car

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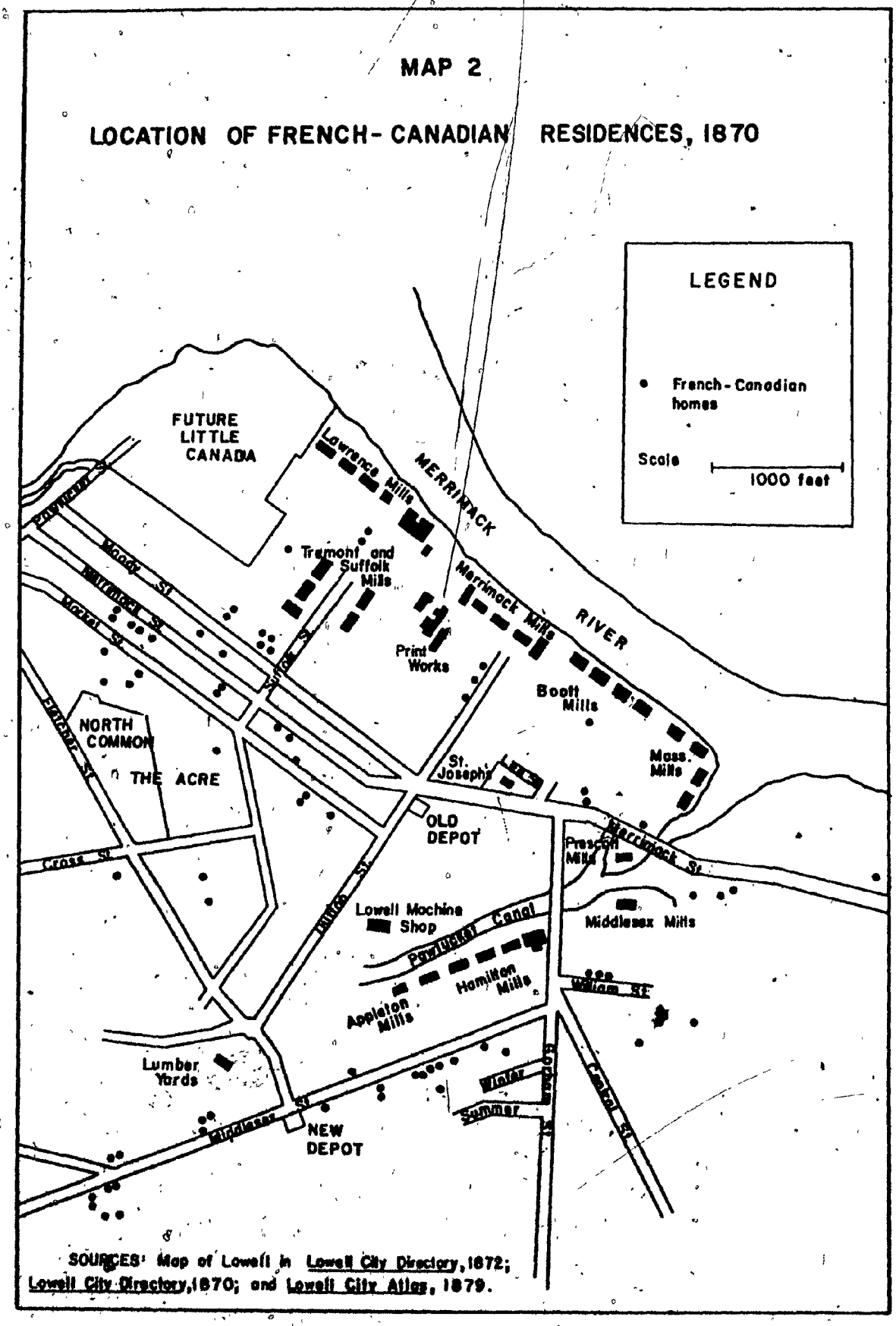
[42]The city directory listed only household heads. The sole women, therefore, who were sometimes included were widows or boarding-house keepers. One French-Canadian widow out of a total of six widows in the 1870 census sample was listed in the city directory for the same year. Louisa Lambert lived in the Old Depot neighborhood at 4 Decateur Street.

[43]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 47.

MAP 2

LOCATION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN RESIDENCES, 1870



SOURCES: Map of Lowell in Lowell City Directory, 1872; Lowell City Directory, 1870; and Lowell City Atlas, 1879.

TABLE 18

DISTRIBUTION AND CONCENTRATION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN HOMES, 1870 AND 1880 COMPARED

Location	No.		Percentage	
	1870	1880	1870	1880
New Depot	27	38	38	38
Old Depot	27	31	38	31
Little Canada	---	16	--	16
The Acre	5	6	7	6
St. Joseph's	4	3	6	3
Other	8	6	11	6
Total	71	100	100	100

SOURCES: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample; Lowell City Directory, 1870; and Lowell City Directory, 1880.

trolley ran along Merrimack Street. The rumble of railroad cars was probably continual along the tracks linking the depot to the various mills located on several streets to the north of Merrimack Street, either parallel or perpendicular to this main thoroughfare. French Canadians in this area were within a fifteen or twenty minute walk of their parish church on Lee Street, one block north of the eastern end of Merrimack Street. Flats in the upper floors of business establishments were available on Merrimack and Market Streets. Lodgings could also be found in the many little courtyards, alley-ways, and side streets which ran off and back from Merrimack and Market Streets or other nearby streets.

A second concentration of French Canadians existed in the area surrounding the newer train depot on Middlesex Street, one-half mile southwest of the older station (see map 1--New Depot district). Middlesex Street was also located in a business district and was serviced by a horse-car trolley. Shops and businesses--a carriage manufactory, a blacksmith establishment, a tin shop, for instance--were numerous. Several of the textile corporations were located here as were several lumber yards. Lodgings were available in buildings containing business establishments. As was the case in the Merrimack-Market Street area, narrow side streets, courtyards, and alleys ran off of Middlesex Street and contained many working-

class tenements.

French Canadians were not providing many retail or professional services for their own people at this time. In the 1870 census sample there were only three traders, one dry goods dealer, one huckster shop owner, one saloon keeper, and three physicians. It was important, then, for French Canadians to have had shops, professional services, and banks near at hand. Professionals--lawyers, doctors, dentists--had offices in both neighborhoods. One French-Canadian physician, Edelman St. Cyr, had an office at 327 Merrimack. Most lawyers were on Central Street which ran at right angles to both Merrimack and Middlesex Streets. French Canadians could walk to Central Street or take a trolley.[44] The city post office, an important service for French Canadians, and two banks were just around the corner from the parish church on Lee Street. More day-to-day services--groceries, butcher shops, blacksmith establishments, dry goods dealers--were available in both French-Canadian areas of residence. There were, in addition, several billiard halls and saloons in these vicinities.

Few French Canadians in 1870 were living in the district known as the Acre. Many housing conditions in

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this area were abysmal, reputedly the worst in Lowell, it is understandable that French Canadians avoided it. They might also have wished to steer clear of the Acre because it was Lowell's oldest Irish neighborhood; many Irish people could still be found there in the 1870s.[45] The lack of French-Canadian residences in the St. Joseph district was due to the dearth of tenements in this area, which contained instead mills, boarding houses, four churches, a school, and, along Merrimack Street, numerous business establishments.

Contemporary and secondary sources leave the impression that most French Canadians resided in Little Canada by 1880. They also imply that by 1880 this area was a French-Canadian ghetto.[46] In order to test these assumptions two methods were employed. First a sample of 100 French-Canadian names were drawn from the city directory for 1880. The addresses of these people were than plotted

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[45]The heavy concentration of Irish in the Acre and housing conditions in this period are discussed in Albert Gibbs Mitchell, Jr., "Irish Family Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Ireland and Lowell, Massachusetts," (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1976), pp. 205-15. The other main area of Irish concentration at this time was in the Chapel Hill neighborhood, which did not contain many French Canadians and which was located across the Pawtucket Canal, south of the St. Joseph's district (below the Middlesex Mills), and east of the New Depot district. William and Green as well as Gorham and Central Streets, had heavy concentrations of Irish in this area. Mitchell, "Irish Family Patterns," p. 209.

[46]Massachusetts, State Board of Health, Annual Report, 1880, Supplement, p. 123; Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 47; and Coburn, History of Lowell, pp. 343-44.

on a map. The results (see table 18 and map 3) show that in fact the Old Depot and New Depot districts still contained almost 70 per cent of French Canadians in 1880. Less than one of every five French Canadians lived in the district called Little Canada, an area whose location made it a natural extension of the Old Depot neighborhood (see map 3). Then, an analysis of the entire population of Little Canada as listed in the 1880 directory was undertaken, revealing that only one of every two homes in that area was French Canadian (see table 19 and map 4). French Canadians were thickly settled on the streets in the upper part of Little Canada, constituting the major ethnic group there. But they represented less than one-third of the residents in the lower part. For instance, on Cabot Street in lower Little Canada household heads with Irish or English names out-numbered those with French names. The Bergerons and Lapierres lived next door or down the street from the Kelleys, the Cunninghams, the O'Brien's, the Hills, the Cooks, and the Pages.

French Canadians were not becoming [illegible] in this period, although their persistence in both the Old and New Depot districts over the 1870s and [illegible] than in the upper area of Little Canada by [illegible]

TABLE 19

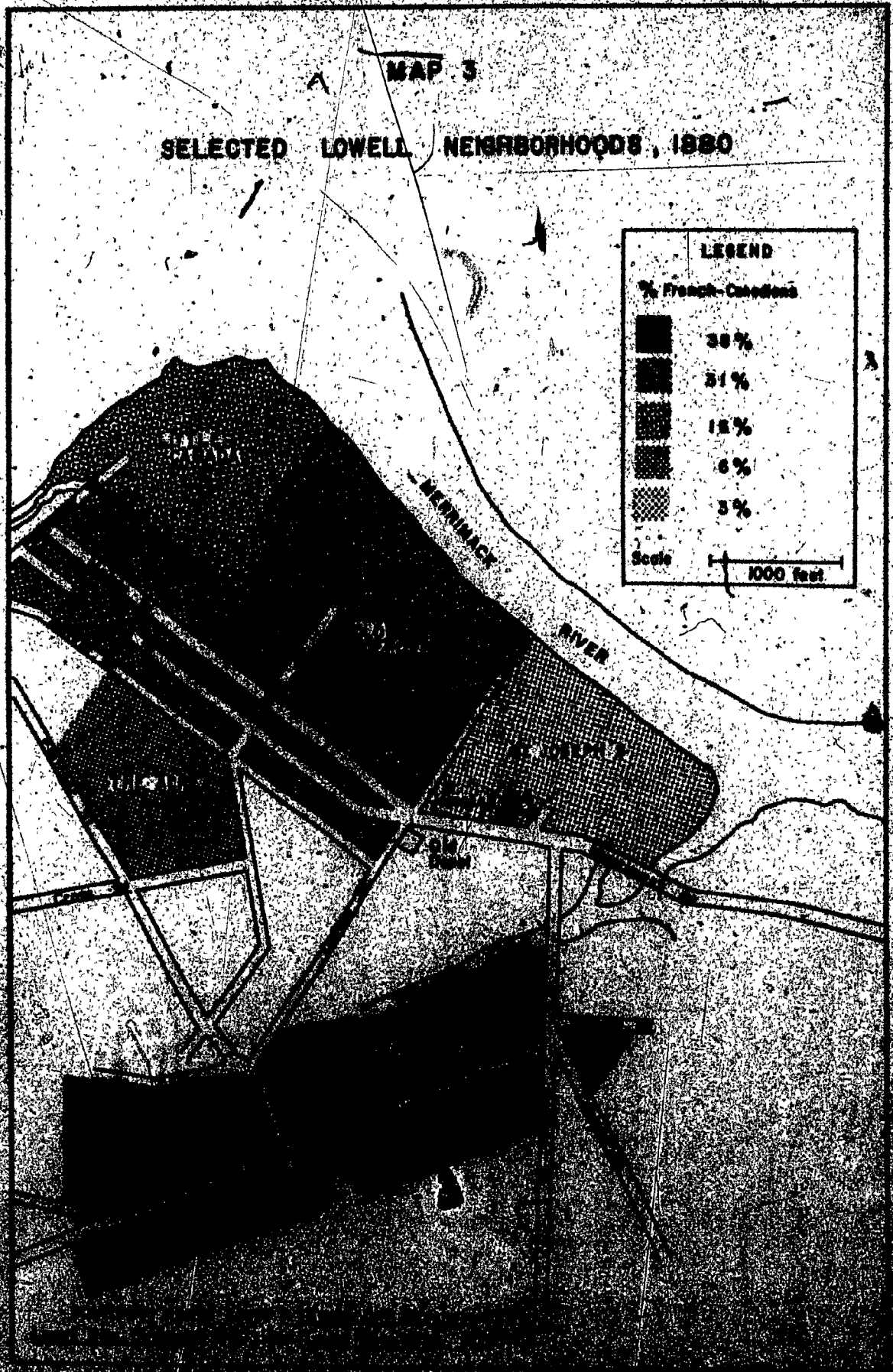
DISTRIBUTION OF FRENCH CANADIANS LIVING IN LITTLE CANADA IN 1880 BY STREET ADDRESS

Street Names	Total Listings	Total F.C.	Percentage F.C.
Streets with 2/3 or more F.C. residents			
Austin	20	13	65
Hall	33	26	79
Aiken	65	55	85
Total	118	94	80
Streets with 1/3 or less F.C. residents			
Cheever	18	6	33
Coolidge	13	4	31
Cabot	106	30	28
Ford	42	3	--
Total	179	43	24
Grand Total (All streets)	297	137	46

SOURCE: Lowell City Directory, 1880.

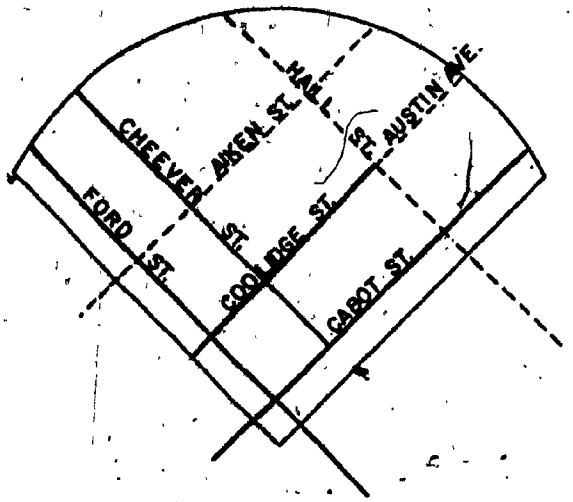
MAP 3

SELECTED LOWELL NEIGHBORHOODS, 1880



MAP 4

DISTRIBUTION AND CONCENTRATION OF FRENCH - CANADIANS IN LITTLE CANADA, 1880



——— streets which have $\frac{1}{4}$ or less identified French-Canadians

—"—"— streets which have $\frac{3}{4}$ or more identified French-Canadians

[illegible] Directory, 1878;
[illegible]

that neighborhoods were developing. French Canadians doubtless preferred to live near people of their own ethnic origin, but they also needed to live near their place of work. Many French-Canadian women and children as well as a number of French-Canadian men were employed in factories. Maps 1 and 3 show that most French Canadians in these years resided within a few blocks of one of the major textile corporations. The development of Little Canada was due in no small measure to the recognition of businessmen that they could profit from the need of French Canadians and other working-class people of different ethnic backgrounds for housing within easy walking distance of work.[47] But the manner in which Little Canada developed in the 1870s indicates that people in this district had some choices available to them. French Canadians could, with a bit of luck, live on streets where most of their neighbors were French Canadians. People of other nationalities, for their own part, could live on streets where fewer French Canadians resided. Then, too, it should be recalled that hardly any French Canadians lived in the Acre, the predominantly Irish neighborhood. Housing conditions were wretched in the Acre, but they were deplorable in other areas where French Canadians lived like Little Canada. It seems likely

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[47]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 42.

that a sense of incipient hostility or at least of wariness between the Irish and French-Canadian immigrant populations was the major factor which led French Canadians to shun the Acre. They were able to settle in other neighborhoods where the Irish presence was not so overwhelming, where workplace, shops, and social services were nearby, and where significant concentrations of other French Canadians occurred. Nevertheless, French Canadians were not ghettoized. Though they usually had French-Canadian neighbors, they also often rubbed shoulders with people of other cultures in the streets, in the halls and stairways of tenement buildings, and in the corner grocery stores and tobacco shops. This proximity to non-French Canadians must have influenced the accommodation process in subtle ways, a theme which will be expanded upon when the development of the French-Canadian community in Lowell is discussed.

IV

French-Canadian neighborhoods offered three kinds of housing in this period, apartments attached to business establishments, single family dwellings, or multiple family dwellings.[48] From the 1830s small-scale business establishments existed along Merrimack Street; the same holds true for Middlesex Street, though not until the

[48] Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, pp. 54, 73-93.

1860s.[49] These buildings, usually constructed of brick, frequently combined shop and home: "The brick norm was three and a half stories high, gable roofed, and of considerable, although varying, length. Below would be a room of shops, above the dwellings of the owners."[50] Alternatively available were solidly constructed, detached, wooden, two-storey single-family dwellings, usually gable-roofed with several bow windows.[51] Probably more accessible to the French-Canadian family pocketbook, however, was the cheaply constructed "multiple" dwelling which "consisted of a great rectangular block crowned with an almost flat roof."[52] Multiple family dwellings existed in small numbers in Lowell in the 1850s. After the Civil War, with the rapid growth of Lowell's population, this kind of housing increased tremendously.[53] By the 1880s "block" tenements, as these dwellings were called, were common in many Lowell neighborhoods.[54]

Unfortunately, no explicit descriptions exist of French-Canadian homes in Lowell in the 1870s. Nonetheless,

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[49]Ibid., pp. 76-78, 92.

[50]Ibid., p. 54.

[51]Ibid., p. 92.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid., and Kanngott, Record of a City, pp. 50-52.

there are clues. Homes of "the poor" or "the laboring poor" were occasionally discussed by government bureaus or charity organizations. In some cases, when addresses were provided, these dwellings were in areas where French Canadians resided. According to one charity oaganization, the Ministry-at-Large, a "large class" of Lowell's "laboring poor" could not afford decent housing in 1871. Because of inadequate family incomes some people were "driven to accept tenements at high rates in filthy streets and alleys, in uncomfortable attics or damp basements."[55] The Lowell Board of Health agreed: in 1871 squalid, overcrowded "abodes of poverty" existed.[56] In 1873, however, the Board reported that housing for "working people" was "satisfactory in their house accommodation and general sanitary care." Even homes of "the poor" had improved:

> In common with all the rest, the homes of the poor experienced the beneficial effect of vigilance in sanitary matters, and the evidence is absolute that the abodes of poverty in Lowell, the premises around which more than any others the squalor, the filth and the misery of overcrowding lurked, are to-day comparatively free from the extreme abuses which prevail in some other localities in Massachusetts.[57]

Nevertheless, the Board gave some examples of sub-standard

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[55] Twenty-seventh Annual Report of the Ministry, p. 15.

[56] Massachusetts, State Board of Health, Fourth Annual Report, 1873, p. 409.

[57] Ibid.

housing. William and Gorham Streets, for instance, which intersected one block north of Middlesex Street, had homes with rubbish-strewn back yards and dirty cellars.[58] At least three French-Canadian families lived on William Street in a tenement called "Morrison's Block," half a dozen French-Canadian families lived within a few blocks of these streets. But significantly perhaps the Board of Health reserved its sternest condemnation for a section of town where many Irish, but no French Canadians, lived:

> In Middle Street were seen a series of wooden tenement-blocks of one story each. The tenements consisted of two and three small rooms, and they were all too full. Many of them were unfit for human habitation, from lack of proper conveniences or from want of general repairs. Two of the blocks had basement dwellings almost entirely below the level of the street, and approached by a steep and broken stairway leading down to the damp area in front of the doors. These cellars were occupied by Irish tenants, who urged their poverty in extenuation of their occupancy of an underground dwelling.[59]

This description of poor housing in an Irish district is not dissimilar from descriptions of housing for Little Canada in the 1880s and 1890s. Contemporary sources strongly associate French Canadians with sub-standard living conditions in Little Canada. Most French Canadians did not live in Little Canada in 1880. Nevertheless, about one in six did. Oral interviews with French Canadians who remember life in Little Canada in the early

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[58] Ibid., p. 42[illegible].

[59] Ibid. See also Hutchens, "Irish Family Patterns," pp. 207-08. Hutchens found many Irish living along Middle Street in 1880.

twentieth century stress that only French-Canadians lived there.[60] The hypothesis that Little Canada eventually became a ghetto is not yet proven and must be tested by further research. In the meantime it can be assumed that whether or not Little Canada became an exclusively French-Canadian neighborhood, it probably became increasingly French in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. For this reason it is important to look at conditions in the 1880s and 1890s.

Before the Civil War the area which would become Little Canada was undeveloped. A small section served as the city dump, the rest was swampland. After the Civil War Lowell housing facilities could not accommodate all newcomers to Lowell. The Locks and Canals Company therefore, which owned much of the property in this section of town, began leasing plots of land to private individuals, who filled in swampy areas, mostly with refuse from the dump, and constructed flimsy wooden structures. Sometimes buildings were no more than small renovated horse sheds, but more often they were large three or four story "block" tenements which contained from 24 to 36 units.[61] City and state investigative reports of the time

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[60] See for instance Levasseur, "Little Canada," p. 6.

[61] Coburn, History of Lowell, pp. 343-44; Parker, Lowell, pp. 86-88; and Peter F. Blewett, "New People," in Cotton was King, ed. by Eno, p. 209.

attested that conditions in Little Canada were miserable. The Massachusetts Board of Health, Lunacy, and Charity provided a vivid description of the kind of housing found in Little Canada in 1880:

> The buildings are, most of them, three stories or less in height, and are so close together that it is difficult to pass between them. There are others (and with windows too) so close together on the side next the neighboring building, that a person cannot pass between, where the eaves overlap, and the rooms are dark at three p.m. Out of the windows it is not unusual to throw slops and swill, perchance into a neighbor's window if it happens to be open . . . . There are no visible fire-escapes to these great tinder-boxes, and the widest space between buildings, except openings that are by courtesy called yards is seventeen feet.[62]

Little Canada in 1880 was less than one square mile in extent, but it was overcrowded. One two-acre section had a population density higher than the most crowded ward of New York City. One tenement building in particular, with 36 units, contained 396 people, an average of 11 per unit:

> Every tenement in this building (four rooms usually, except the end ones) has two dark rooms, lighted by small high windows into the kitchen only; and totally dark unventilated rooms are not infrequent through the entire district.[63]

Some families took in boarders which contributed to the overcrowding problem. In one "den" the presence of boarders meant that two young children were put to bed each

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[62]Massachusetts, State Board of Health, Annual Report, 1880, Supplement, pp. 124-25.

[63]Ibid., pp. 126-27.

night in the kitchen sink. Another apartment of five rooms, occupied by a family of eight, accommodated seven boarders.[64]

Although most French Canadians lived in private tenement apartments, a few, mostly single women, lived in boarding establishments. Standards varied, especially between smaller houses, which had formerly been single-family dwellings, and larger corporation-owned buildings. If an individual boarded in one of the smaller lodging houses she probably enjoyed fairly good living conditions. Contemporary descriptions of this kind of housing were favorable. Many houses were brick, semi-detached, with small yards. Even those with wooden frames were well built.[65] But only a small minority of single French-Canadian women boarded in these establishments. Most lived in larger boarding houses. The standards among the larger establishments varied greatly:

> Some of the factory boarding-houses, especially some belonging to the Merrimac Manufacturing Company, are commodious and convenient, with pleasurable surroundings; while a few of them, particularly some of the Middlesex Companies' wooden buildings, are by no means deserving of commendation.[66]

Fortunately only one French Canadian lived in a Middlesex boarding house in 1870, six lived in Merrimack houses.

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[64]Ibid., p. 126.

[65]Kenngott, Record of a City, p. 47; and Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 282.

[66]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Fourth Annual Report, 1873, p. 286.

It appears that housing for French Canadians varied greatly from good to mediocre to poor. But whatever home conditions were like, work conditions for the many French Canadians who worked in the mills were quite unhealthy. Individuals who worked only a short time in the mills could survive the ordeal but poor ventilation, overheated rooms, long hours, and a fast-paced work routine took their toll. Knowledge of work conditions comes primarily from women employees, especially those who were "career" operatives. In 1869, one woman declared bitterly:

> I know what it is to stand up all day in a factory, and keep pace with the belts, and drums, and cylinders, and other parts of the machinery. Flesh and blood, no matter how worn-out and used up, must keep up with the great strength of steam. And I have seen these girls stand watching the clock, and when it struck the hour of noon, they would hurry down long flights of stairs, rush to their boarding houses, eat their dinners--or gobble them down--and were back again, up in the top story of the mill, within a quarter of an hour from the time they left.[67]

In 1872, another woman, from Amesbury, Massachusetts, provided an equally depressing commentary on her long years of work as an operative:

> I have been a working-woman in the mill about twenty-five years, or more, and have never seen the time that I could save money enough from my wages to enable me to obtain books, or avail myself of the advantages of lectures, or pleasure trips. I now am growing old and wearing out. Poverty is, and has been, the price of my laborious life. There seem to have been many

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[67] Woman and Child Wage Earners, vol. 9: History of Women in Industry, p. 111. The report does not designate which town and state this woman resided in.

> improvements, reducing the cost of manufactures by the invention of machinery. Yet the wages of the work-women have not advanced thereby. Larger dividends have blessed capital, while labor remains the same. The time has been when the summer would stop every wheel and spindle, causing debts to traders and private boarding-houses, and scattering the operatives far and wide. The introduction of steam when the water fails, closes up the weeks and months of rusticating among the hills and vales of home, and the sea-side and river rambles.[68]

Capsule descriptions of the work experience of two Lowell operatives reinforce these depressing portrayals of mill life for the single woman of this era:

> An American girl came to Lowell from Vermont, and worked for fifteen years on a woollen corporation, had no one to support but herself, and left the mill poor, broken in health, and now earns her living by sewing.
>
> A. S., another American girl, commenced work in one of the Lowell corporations, continued so to do for eighteen years, supported herself and saved one thousand dollars out of her earnings. She is now broken in health.[69]

One-thousand dollars over 18 years or roughly 56 dollars per year: quite a price was paid for such savings. Even if a person did not work in a factory over an entire lifetime, it did not take many months for the unhealthy environment to begin to affect an operative's health. One woman who worked in one of the Lowell carpet mills stated in 1872 that her days in the mill had been constantly

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[68]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Third Annual Report, 1872, p. 110.

[69]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Fourth Annual Report, 1873, p. 286.

interrupted because of "throat and tonsil difficulty." She added that many others shared her health problem. In the weaving room where she worked with 263 other women:

> There is a good deal of dust, but it settles down. Some cannot work on account of the high colors and poison dye. The girls complain of lung diseases, sore throat, and general debility. They all have a haggard appearance, they look better than the girls in the Cotton Mills. In our rooms there are windows at the side and overhead. Those overhead are painted to keep out the sunlight. We cannot open the windows on a damp day, it affects the warp, so that we could not weave . . . . The air is bad Monday mornings and after lighting up time. Have a good deal of headache in the afternoon. Have to talk with motion of the lips. Cannot hear however loud we talk. The more we keep our mouths shut the better.[70]

This woman noted that cotton mill workers suffered from working conditions which were worse than her own. Most Lowell French Canadians employed as operatives worked in the cotton mills, children as well as adults.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the death rate in Little Canada was the highest of any district in Lowell in 1880. The published census of 1880 reported a death rate of 29.6 per thousand in the district of Ward 5 which contained Little Canada.[71] In the most congested

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[70]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Third Annual Report, 1872, pp. 109-10. This same woman also stated that accidents were common:

> "It seems to be of no account to have a finger taken off. One girl had 2 fingers off during the past year. A girl has been hurt on each successive Saturday for three weeks. I know 5 girls so hurt. A man was nearly killed by falling down from the harness frame on to the loom frame."

Ibid., p. 109.

[71]Kenngott, Record of a City, pp. 69-70.

area within this district the death rate was 47 per thousand. The only other ward in Lowell with a death rate similar to that of Little Canada was ward 1, where the death rate stood at 25.5 per thousand. One district within ward 1, which included the Irish neighborhood, the Acre, had a death rate of 38.9.[72] The rate for Lowell as a whole was 22 per thousand in 1880.[73]

In 1885 the situation was much the same; the death rate was highest for French Canadians, 37.4. It was lowest for the English, 13.6. The death rate for the Irish was 32.2, for the native Americans, 15.9. In 1890 French Canadians still had the highest death rate, 37.5. Although the Irish death rate had declined to 27.3, the English and native-American death rate had risen to 23.5 and 19.3 respectively.[74]

Over half of all deaths in 1880 occurred among children under the age of five. For the entire period, 1880 through 1900, child mortality in this age group was 40 per cent. The majority of "these innocents" were from

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[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid.

[74]The overall death rate was 25.2 in 1890 (in 1885 it was 20.7, in 1880, 22). Kenngott, Record of a City, pp. 69-74. By 1885 it is possible to speak of the death rate in terms of ethnic groups. The state census of this year breaks death rates down according to nationality. The federal census does so in 1890.

working-class families "who lived in tenement houses and in unwholesome quarters, in narrow streets and alleys, in small courts and back yards, in places where sanitary laws [were] grossly violated." Many of these children were French Canadian. Unsanitary, overcrowded conditions in Little Canada were repeatedly cited in the 1880s and 1890s as the primary cause for the "fearful mortality" among children in this district.[75]

Death also struck at adults prematurely. In 1887 the Lowell City physician stated that the high mortality rate in some Lowell districts was caused to a large extent by the combination of poor work and home environments among working-class people, be they children or adults:

> A very large portion of our population is at work in the mills, enduring in the winter while at work, a high temperature, then exposing themselves to a zero temperature returning to their homes, and often finding a cold, damp house to eat and sleep in. Such changes of temperature by those who leave their work tired and worn out with their day's labor, are sure to bring disaster in some of the feebler ones. Then, again, the younger children, left at home for the day, perhaps with an insufficiency of food and warmth, many of them, succumb to the inevitable.[76]

Immigrants to Lowell, both native Americans and foreigners, were the chief victims in this situation:

> Many of these persons are not sufficiently robust

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[75]Kenngott, Record of a City, p. 71.

[76]Quoted in ibid., p. 74.

> to stand the strain of acclimatization, and they fall by the way. Others, who were strong and robust when they came from their rural homes, being confined in the small tenement blocks of the city, are attacked by diseases of various kinds and perish. Now, of this class, there is a large number gathered, for the most part, in the more densely populated districts of the city. They are exposed to the most dangerous and unsanitary influences, perhaps where sewers and drains are defective and filth of every description abounds. Sometimes ten or fifteen persons may be found crowded together in one small apartment.[77]

Only in the 1890s did the overall death rate, including that of French Canadians, begin to improve secularly in Lowell. In 1900 the mortality rate was 19.5. Deaths among French Canadians were considerably lower than in previous years, 24 per thousand.[78] Contemporaries attributed the decline to a well-organized health department which was finally in a position to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, especially among children, through house-to-house inspection of sanitary conditions, enforcement of laws related to improved plumbing methods and garbage disposal, vaccination programs, and contagious-disease hospital services.[79] Nevertheless, even at this time, officials singled out French Canadians as the major threat to outbreaks of smallpox. In 1905, however, instead of unsanitary, crowded housing conditions, the chief

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[77]Ibid., pp. 74-75.

[78]The English rate was 17.1, the native America, 18, the Irish, 21.7. Kenngott, Record of a City, p. 75.

[79]Kenngott, Record of a City, p. 75.

cause was alleged to be the French-Canadian propensity to neglect vaccinating their children.[80]

Life for French Canadians in Lowell was harsh, almost brutal. Many immigrants lived out their days in unhealthy, debilitating work and home environments. People died prematurely; many children never reached school age. But these grim conditions did not prevent French Canadians from building decent lives for themselves. Apart from the earliest settlers, newcomers used kinship or friendship ties to help them settle into their new surroundings. The recruiting agent or "assistance" businessman aided those who had no acquaintances in Lowell. Finding homes in neighborhoods where substantial numbers of French Canadians lived presented few problems to newcomers who could also rely on personal contacts to help them find work. Household sharing arrangements among French Canadians were not uncommon. This custom was probably influenced by kinship and friendship relationships; nuclear families often took in boarders, especially people who had no family of their own in Lowell. These assistance customs and the personal relationships which they were based upon created a sense of mutuality among French Canadians which endured past the initial settling-in period. Close personal ties helped people feel psycholog-

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[80] Ibid., p. 76.

ically secure and helped them endure material privations and hardships with fortitude and dignity.

CHAPTER VI

FAMILY ECONOMY AND STANDARD OF LIVING

> When I was a girl [in the 1880s] 'pretty nearly everyone went off to the States. Farming did not pay as well as it does now, prices were low, we were always hearing of the big wages earned over there in the factories, and every year one family after another sold out for next to nothing and left Canada. Some made a lot of money, no doubt of that, especially those families with plenty of daughters.[1]

By 1870 large families were frequently an economic burden in rural Quebec. The agricultural system could no longer provide livelihoods for all habitant children. Many farm families who could not earn adequate livings in Quebec moved to the states. Some families settled in Lowell. They lost no time in finding jobs, establishing homes, and creating a spirit of mutual support and assistance among themselves. They also set about modifying the French-Canadian tradition of the family farm economy to meet the exigencies of new circumstances. The way in which French Canadians accommodated the family productive unit to an urban-industrial, largely working-class way of life profoundly effected their standard of living in these years.

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[1]Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine, p. 62.

I

French-Canadian families in Lowell, whether or not they had come directly from rural Quebec, were familiar with and influenced by behavior patterns and values associated with the family farm economy. On Quebec farms the family functioned as the primary productive unit. All members contributed their labor, and from an early age this included children, girls as well as boys. Children's work accomplished more than day-to-day help in the production process. It also served an apprenticeship function: it trained children in the farming skills and household activities they needed as adults. Formal schooling in this context was devalued. Education beyond a basic level--reading, writing, and simple arithmetic--was required only for children who would become priests or nuns.[2]

Children worked hard. As portrayed in Maria Chapdelaine, performance of adult tasks resulted in adult status for a boy:

> He smoked and talked with the men now by virtue of his fourteen years, his broad shoulders and his knowledge of husbandry. Eight years ago he had begun to care for the stock, and to replenish the store of wood for the house with the aid of his little sled. Somewhat later he had learned to call Heulle! Heulle! very loudly behind the thin-flanked cows, and Heu! Dia! Harrié! when the horses were ploughing; to manage a hay-fork and to build a rail-fence. These two years he had taken turn beside his father with ax and scythe, driven the big woodsleigh over the hard snow, sown and reaped

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[2]Gérald Fortin, "Socio-Cultural Changes in an Agricultural Parish," in French-Canadian Society, ed. by Rioux and Martin, vol. 1, pp. 94-95.

> on his own responsibility; and thus it was that no one disputed his right freely to express an opinion and to smoke incessantly the strong leaf-tobacco. . . . In the Province of Quebec the boys are looked upon as men when they undertake men's work.[3]

Girls and women worked arduously in and around the home and at times in the fields. In Thirty Acres a young wife and mother received some help in child-care tasks from her mother-in-law, but she did not have daughters old enough to otherwise help lighten her work routine:

> Alphonsine had all the house-work; the meals to get, as she leaned over the red-hot oven, often with the child she was nursing held in her left arm; the floors to be scrubbed; the sewing and the mending; the family wash to be done; and, once a year, the brown oily soap to be made in a cauldron hung over a big fire in the yard. She had the kitchen-garden too. . . . She did all this work without pleasure, but without distaste. Weren't all these a woman's usual tasks? And when the harvest-time came round with the need for hurry, she would leave everything to go and work in the fields.[4]

French-Canadian nuclear families coming to Lowell brought the idea of the family farm economy with them, as their behavior demonstrates. Occupational data shows that children contributed their share from an early age; children of 11 and 12 often worked outside the home for wages, while children past this age almost invariably did so. The only adult members in families who were not gainfully employed were mothers. But these women almost always reported themselves as "keeping house"--they were busy in the home.

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[3]Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine, p. 35.

[4]Ringuet, Thirty Acres, pp. 75-76.

Comments made by Félix Albert in his autobiography reinforce these statistical findings. He casually remarks that one of his first projects upon arrival in Lowell in 1887 with his wife and nine children, the oldest of whom was 14 years old, was to find employment for several of his offspring in factories.[5] However, when the question arose of whether his wife would also contribute occasional earnings for the family by taking in laundry Albert was nonplussed: "My wife had always been cared for by me and had never had to work for others." When she showed him a dollar she had earned, he became adamant: "I have not reached a level here," Albert told his wife, "which requires you to work. I think we can get along without that." His prediction proved accurate: "From that day forward she has never worked a day [for others]."[6]

II

Seven in ten French-Canadian children in the 1870 census sample age 11 or more held jobs outside the home. Only five of these children had attended school in the previous year.[7] This kind of behavior relates to French-Canadian attitudes toward child labor--children had worked

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[5]Albert, Histoire, p. 59.

[6]Ibid., pp. 59-60.

[7]Virtually all French-Canadian children age six or more who lived with their parents and who were not gainfully employed were reported as having attended school in the previous year.

hard and long hours at young ages on the farm, they could do the same in an industrial setting. Albert's decision regarding his children illustrates this point. He, along with other French-Canadian parents, took child labor for granted. But, it might be added, with good reason--children's work was necessary on the farm, and it might also have been necessary in a textile town.

While the manuscript census of 1870 provides the raw material for a statistical analysis of the frequency of child labor in Lowell French-Canadian families, it does not include the kind of data required to discuss the relationship between family economy and standard of living. Other sources must, therefore, also be consulted. In 1875, the state of Massachusetts conducted a survey on the standard of living of working-class families. The report of this study contains useful insights and information. Wage data is also available for this period. These sources, used in conjunction with information culled from the manuscript census, permit the construction of an annual-income poverty line. This poverty line can then be used to estimate the standard of living of Lowell French-Canadian families.

Three-hundred ninety-seven working-class families in different towns and cities of Massachusetts reported in 1875 the following to officials from the state's Bureau of Labor Statistics: occupation of household head, amount household head and other working members of the family

earned per year (age and sex of secondary wage earners specified), and yearly budget (itemized). The bureau officials or interviewers who visited these families reported on diet, housing, clothing, and general appearance. Twenty-nine of the families interviewed were French Canadians, of which 26 had household heads who were unskilled laborers.[8] Ten worked in mills, 12 in out-door employment, 1 in an iron works, 1 in a machine shop, 1 on a wharf; 1 was employed by builders. The mean annual income of these laborers was $385, the median was $402.[9]

Although no mothers in these 26 families worked outside the home, 36 children did so. Taken together the earnings of these children represented 39 per cent of the income of these families. Twenty-two per cent was contributed by children under the age of 16. Clearly working children were crucial to the French-Canadian family economy.

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[8]The individual interview reports on French-Canadian families are found in Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Sixth Annual Report, 1875, pp. 235-36, 240, 275-76, 293-96, 307, 311-14, 337. Seventeen families representing 88 people were interviewed in Lowell. Unfortunately their ethnicity was not given in the report. Sixth Annual Report, 1875, p. 203.

[9]There was a range of $345 (laborer in mill) to $502 (laborer in machine shop). Only the laborer in an iron works, who earned $480, approached the range ceiling income of $502. The difference in income between mill laborers and out-door laborers was not great: the mean for mill laborers was $387, the median $383; the mean for out-door laborers was $396, the median was $398.

Two factors which affected the earning power of these families were number of working children and family size. The mean annual secondary earnings of a family with one child worker was $210; with two children the mean was $384. Since the mean earnings of a father in these families was $385, it can be seen that one child wage earner could boost, on average, the family income by more than half. Two child wage earners more than doubled the family income. The proportion of child contributions increased with family size. In families with four members, children contributed 32 per cent of the income, in families with five members, 36 percent, in families with six members, 41 per cent, in families with seven or eight members, 46 per cent.[10]

Despite the earnings of these children, savings were minimal. Thirteen of the 26 families managed to live on their incomes, while four went into debt to the tune of an average $40 per family. Only nine families were able to put anything aside, an average $21 per family.

Descriptions of general living conditions--diet, housing, clothing, and personal appearance--reveal that the eleven families with two children working, regardless of family size, fared much better than the fourteen fam-

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[10]Nine of the 36 working children in these families were 16 or 17. Their mean earnings were $285, significantly higher than mean earnings of all children ($210). Of the 26 families, 2 had 4 members, 11 had 5 members, 9 had 6 members, 3 had 7 members, and 1 had 8 members.

ilies with one child working or the one family with no child workers. The living conditions and general demeanor of the people in eight of the eleven families with two child workers were good; the remaining three varied from fair to poor.[11]

One of the most prosperous families with two child wage earners was headed by an out-door laborer who earned only $360 in the year. But a 17-year-old daughter contributed $240, a 14-year old son, $172. The combined income, $772, supported seven people. This family lived in a five-room tenement which was "well situated, in a pleasant neighborhood, with good surroundings." The apartment was "tastefully furnished" and the parlor carpeted. This family was exceptional in that it owned a piano and a sewing machine. Only one other family in this group of 26 owned a sewing machine. The diet was balanced and consisted of hearty breakfasts and dinners which included meat and vegetables in addition to starches and coffee. The family had saved $20 by the end of the year.[12]

Only one of the eleven families with two child wage earners was in really bad straits. This family, also with seven members, had young children working, boys, aged

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[11]The ratings here, good, fair, and poor, are derived impressionistically from interviewers' descriptions of diet, housing, clothing, and general appearance of family members.

[12]Sixth Annual Report, 1875, p. 313.

10 and 12. For this reason the total family income was $100 less than the well-off family with older working children described above. This family lived in a neat four-room tenement, but everyone looked "pale and unhealthy." The parents battled to keep out of debt. The family lived within its means but at a price: "The father has to work all the time, as well as the children." Because he had lost six days through sickness in the year, the family had "had to go without necessary clothing."[13]

Daily existence for most of the fourteen families with only one child worker can only be described as depressing. Two families seemed to be managing to secure the basic necessities. The rest all suffered from certain deprivations, some families more so than others. Families with very young child workers were especially disadvantaged. One such family of six lived on the earnings of the father, a mill laborer, and a 10-year old son, $572 altogether. Though the family lived within its means, it resided in a shabby tenement neighborhood with privy arrangements which were "unclean and disagreeable." The apartment was "as dirty as the surroundings and very poorly furnished." But the daily diet appeared sufficient--meat once a day. Nevertheless, the family was "poor."[14]

Only one family did not have a child wage earner:

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[13]Ibid., p. 295. [14]Ibid., p. 294.

the four children, all under 10, were too young to work. The father was hard-pressed to provide for his family. As a laborer on a wharf he earned $510 in the year. He also picked up an additional $80 "at jobbing." This double exertion was not enough to avoid indebtedness. The family budget was $45 in the red by the end of the year. The family lived in a small, poorly furnished three-room tenement which was "out of repair." Family members dressed "miserably" and looked "haggard." Breakfast and supper consisted of only bread and coffee or tea. At mid-day, however, the family ate meat or fish, potatoes, and bread.[15]

The information summarized thus far points to the conclusion that living standards for French-Canadian working-class families in which the father was an unskilled laborer were generally low. Some families, however, eeked out a more bearable existence than others. This was due primarily to the number of working children in a family. For regardless of size, those families with no employed children or only one employed child usually faced the hardships and anxieties of daily deprivation. Those families with at least two children working secured basic needs, sometimes they even enjoyed a "luxury" item such as a carpeted parlor or, more rarely, a sewing machine. Even the families with two child workers, however, saved little over a year.

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[15]Ibid., p. 337.

Unfortunately the 1875 survey contains little information on the living standard of families headed by fathers in skilled occupations. But information exists for three families, one headed by a boot-maker and two by carpenters. These families enjoyed a standard of living which was superior to that of most of the families headed by unskilled workers. One carpenter, the sole support of the family, earned $628 in the year. He, his wife and two pre-school children lived comfortably in a "well-furnished" four-room tenement. The family dressed well and yearly savings amounted to $21.[16] A boot-maker and his 15-year old daughter provided a good livelihood for a family of five. Together they earned $795.[17] In most families where the father was an unskilled worker, two children worked to earn an equivalent amount. A third family with seven members had a truly sumptuous life in comparison with the other French-Canadian families in the survey. A carpenter and his two sons, aged 15 and 17, earned $1,353 in the year. This family lived in a six-room tenement--the only family of the entire group to have six rooms--which was well furnished with two carpeted rooms. The family dressed well and ate plentifully three times a day. Savings for the year were $224.[18]

It is regrettable that so few French-Canadian families with skilled-worker fathers were included in the sur-

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[16]Ibid., p. 235. [17]Ibid., p. 240. [18]Ibid., p.236.

vey. But for the three who were interviewed the struggle for survival was less intense than for families in which the father was an unksilled laborer. Nevertheless, even in these three families a pattern of child labor had emerged. Although families headed by skilled workers might not have depended on children's earnings for basic survival, parents sent their children out to work anyway. The payoff was a more comfortable life, even savings.

French-Canadian families constituted only a small part of the 397 families who were interviewed in 1875. Some comparisons relating to family economy and standard of living between French-Canadian families and non-French-Canadian families can, therefore, be made. As was the case in most French-Canadian families, fathers in the majority of the remaining 368 families did not support their families on their individual wages alone.[19] This was more often true if the father was an unskilled worker. Ninety per cent of unskilled-worker fathers depended upon some assistance from their children as opposed to 44 per cent of skilled-worker fathers.[20] Only a few mothers worked.[21]

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[19]Two-hundred fifty-five families (64 per cent) depended on the wages of at least one secondary wage earner, Sixth Annual Report, 1875, p. 357.

[20]Ibid., p. 458. The numbers are in the report, the percentages are mine.

[21]Twelve mothers were gainfully employed. Their nationalities were: Irish (4), native-American(3), English (4), German (1). Sixth Annual Report, 1875, p. 368.

One quarter of family income came from children's wages.[22]

Comparing French-Canadian families with families of other nationalities brings out important differences.[23] Native-American and English fathers supported their families unassisted more often than French-Canadian and Irish fathers: 1 in 4 native-American and 7 in 10 English families relied on secondary wages of children, while 9 in 10 French-Canadian and Irish families did so.[24] This situation was largely due to the fathers' occupational level--most American and English fathers were skilled workers and thus earned more than French-Canadian and Irish fathers who were mostly unskilled workers.[25] Mean American and English family incomes were $100 more than French-Canadian and Irish ones, and they supported fewer people.[26] The mean American

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[22]Ibid., p. 371.

[23]Seventeen families were French, Scottish, or German. These were not considered.

[24]Thirty-three of the 125 American families (26 per cent), 118 of the 133 Irish families (89 per cent), 27 of the 29 French-Canadian families (93 per cent), and 55 of the 80 English families (69 per cent), had secondary wage earners. Sixth Annual Report 1875, p. 357. The numbers are in the report, the percentages are mine. These statistics include the 11 mothers who worked--see n. 21, above.

[25]The proportion of skilled fathers within these ethnic groups was: Native-American, 96 per cent; English, 74 per cent; Irish, 23 per cent; and French Canadian, 10 per cent. Sixth Annual Report, 1875, p. 217. The percentages are mine, computed from the figures given in the report.

[26]The means are: Native-American families, $802.98; English families, $818.92; Irish families, $701.62; French-Canadian families, $696.66. Sixth Annual Report, 1875, p. 368.

and English family sizes were 4.3 and 5.0 respectively. The corresponding figure for French-Canadian families was 5.6 for Irish families, 5.8.[27] American and English families also saved more over the year than French-Canadian and Irish families.[28]

French-Canadian and Irish families resembled each other in many ways. In comparison with other working-class families in this survey they had more fathers who were unskilled, they earned less, they saved less, they had more mouths to feed, and they sent more of their children out to work. But the differences among all groups were of degree, not kind. The crucial finding of the survey--the reliance of many working-class families on children's earnings, especially those headed by unskilled workers--applied to families of all nationalities. A meagre standard of living was a reality for most Massachusetts working-class families at this time. The survey concluded on a somber note. It indicted a "wage system" which:

> . . . fails to pay the father so much for his labor that he can in all cases support his family on his own earnings, educate all his children up to a proper age, buy a suitable home from his savings, or lay by enough for his decent support when his laboring powers have failed. . . . It uses men and women when they are strong, and leaves them to shift for themselves when

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[27] Sixth Annual Report, 1875, p. 368.

[28] Ibid., p. 376. Mean savings were: Native-American families, $32.96; English families, $29.44; Irish families, $18.11; and French-Canadian families, $10.59.

> they are sick, infirm or without employment. This it does by paying no more for labor than the bare cost of existence of the body. It usurps to its benefit the future productive power of the state, by employing children who should be in school or at play.[29]

III

The depressing conclusion of the survey that many working-class families depended on secondary wage earners, usually children, merely to squeak by is in sharp contrast with one historian's comment on Lowell French-Canadian families at this time. According to Richard Santerre the prevalence of child labor in these families "gave an appearance of great prosperity."[30] What was the standard of living of Lowell French Canadians at this time actually like? Did it resemble the austere standard of living of many working-class families as depicted in the 1875 survey, or was it superior to this as suggested by Santerre? To answer this question several steps were undertaken. First, poverty-line annual incomes for families in three size categories were determined through the use of the annual income data contained in the 1875 survey for French-Canadian families. Next, the yearly incomes of French-Canadian two-parent nuclear families in the 1870 census sample which were headed by fathers who were common laborers, cotton mill workers, painters, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, or machinists were estimated. Each family

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[29] Sixth Annual Report, 1875, p. 446.

[30] Santerre, Un Peuple, p. 32. My translation.

was then classified according to the already established poverty-line annual income categories. In this manner the standard of living of working-class French-Canadian families in Lowell was ascertained.[31]

Although French-Canadian families living in Lowell in 1870 relied heavily upon the secondary earnings of children, table 20 demonstrates that even with children's wages many working-class families--4 in 10--existed below the poverty line. Roughly 1 in 10 broke even, while 5 in 10 achieved a living standard somewhere above the poverty line. Smaller families fared less well than larger families. Only 3 in 10 families with four to six members lived above the poverty line; 7 in 10 families with seven or more members did so. The presence of more working-age children in many larger families gave these families an advantage over smaller ones. For instance, in one family of four members the father was a common laborer. The oldest child, an 11-year old boy, worked in a cotton mill. But even with two wage earners the family's annual income of $535 still fell below the poverty-line figure for this family size of $585. A second family with seven members, in which the father was also a common laborer, benefitted from the wages of three children, one of whom, a daughter, aged 17, earned adult wages. This family's combined income was $922, well above

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[31]This procedure was quite complicated. A more detailed discussion is found in appendix E, "Sources and Methodology for Determining Standard of Living." The

TABLE 20

CLASSIFICATION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES ACCORDING TO POVERTY LINE AND FAMILY SIZE

Family Size	Poverty-line Category							
	Below		Breaking Even		Above		Total Families	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
4-6	25	56	7	15	13	29	45	55
7-9	5	22	2	8	16	70	23	28
10-12	4	29	0	0	10	71	14	17
Total	34	41	9	11	39	48	82	100

SOURCES: Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Sixth Annual Report, 1875, pp. 235-36, 240, 275-76, 293-96, 307, 311-14, 337; and U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

the $813 poverty-line income for families of this size.

Another factor which affected the standard of living of French-Canadian working-class families in Lowell was the father's occupation. As table 21 shows, families in which the father was a skilled worker generally escaped poverty: only slightly more than 1 in 10 such families lived below the poverty line, while slightly more than half of the families in which the father was an unskilled worker did so. Fathers in unskilled jobs regardless of family size needed contributions from their children. In contrast, some families headed by skilled workers, if small, could survive on the father's wages alone. But as table 22 makes clear even families of seven or more members headed by skilled workers required children's earnings to live decently. For example, in one family of seven, the father, a blacksmith, and two children worked. The family's combined income, $923, was well above the poverty line of $813. But if only one child had been working the family income would have been $764, an income below the poverty line for families of seven members.

Half of the families considered here lived in poverty or near-poverty. "Great prosperity" hardly describes the dominant reality of Lowell French-Canadian working-class family life in 1870. Most children age 11 or more were

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appendix has two sections, "Determining Poverty-Line Annual Incomes" and "Real Wages."

TABLE 21

CLASSIFICATION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES ACCORDING TO POVERTY LINE AND OCCUPATION OF FATHER

Poverty-line Category	Occupation of Father			
	Unskilled		Skilled	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Below	31	53	3	13
Breaking Even	2	3	7	30
Above	26	44	13	57
Total	59	100	23	100

SOURCES: Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Sixth Annual Report, 1875, pp. 235-36, 240, 275-76, 293-96, 307, 311-14, 337; and U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

TABLE 22

NUMBER OF CHILDREN NEEDED TO ESCAPE POVERTY ACCORDING TO OCCUPATION OF FATHER AND FAMILY SIZE[a]

Occupation of Father	No. of Working Children Needed		
	Families of 4-6	Families of 7-9	Families of 10-12
Unskilled			
Common Laborer	2	3	5
Cotton Mill Worker	2	3	5
Skilled			
Painter	1	2	4
Mason	1	2	4
Carpenter	0	2	3
Blacksmith	0	2	3
Machinist	0	2	3

SOURCES: Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Sixth Annual Report, 1875, pp. 235-36, 240, 275-76, 293-96, 307, 311-14, 337; Seventh Annual Report, 1876, pp. 132-34; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Report on Manufacturers, "Factory Report," pp. 46-47; and U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

[a]To escape poverty here means to have an annual income at or above the poverty line.

gainfully employed and did not attend school: family survival was--literally--in their hands. Yet even with the labor of children many families faced deprivations of some sort. The stage in the family life cycle influenced the ability of French Canadians to support themselves adequately. As was the case for families interviewed for the 1875 survey, larger families with several working children lived better than smaller families with one or no working children. The occupation of the father played an important role here. Smaller families headed by an unskilled worker usually faced poverty if their children were too young to be gainfully employed. Smaller families headed by skilled workers, on the other hand, could generally weather this stage in the family life cycle because of the father's higher earnings. All large working-class families, however, required wages from some of their children.

IV

Thus far the discussion on the family economy and standard of living of French Canadian working-class families in Lowell has dealt very little with the role of the wife and mother. But it is important to bring her into central stage for a moment. Like Albert's wife, other French-Canadian women, if they were wives and mothers, rarely worked outside the home for wages. If a family took in boarders, however, the housewife was the one who earned the boarding fee which contributed needed dollars to the

family's income. Because boarders cannot be accurately identified in the 1870 manuscript census, it has not been possible to formally study this practice among French Canadians. Nevertheless, impressionistic evidence from the census as well as contemporary descriptions of French-Canadian living arrangements make it fairly safe to assume that some French-Canadian families in 1870 supplemented their income in this way. By taking in boarders families who have been represented in the standard of living analysis as living in poverty might have actually been escaping this fate.

Even if the French-Canadian housewife did not take in boarders her presence in the home helped in a general way to ameliorate the harshness of industrial working-class family life. Here standard of living considerations shade into quality of life considerations. For while her husband and older children were away from home earning the money needed to pay the rent and to purchase fuel, food, and clothing, the French-Canadian homemaker was caring for younger children and performing daily homecare chores--shopping, cooking, cleaning, sewing--time-consuming, often arduous tasks in the nineteenth century.[32] She was also

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[32]Hareven has discovered that for a later period in the textile town of Manchester, New Hampshire (1900-24), young French-Canadian wives and mothers did not escape mill work. Between the ages of 35 and 55, however, as their children entered the factories, many mothers quit work for a time. After age 55, when their children had left home, many women re-entered the mills. Hareven, "Family Time," pp. 378-80. See also Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, "Women's

likely to be in charge of a rigid daily schedule dictated in many Lowell working-class homes by a mill clock:

> Workers employed in the same factories usually live close to one another. They go to bed and rise at the same hour, and in this manner form a sort of working-class community. It is surprising to find so much order and good cheer among them. The reason for this is that a policeman's role is usually accorded to women. The French-Canadian woman, once she decided to get involved, makes a matchless "policeman."[33]

While working-class wives and mothers were busily engaged in home work, fathers and most children left home early in the morning six days a week to earn wages. Not many Lowell French-Canadian working-class families in 1870 could point to property-holding as one of the rewards for their hard work, but a few could. Ten working-class men in the census sample reported property, eight skilled workers and two unskilled workers.[34] All were married and all

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Work and the Family in Nineteenth Century Europe, "Comparative Studies in Society and History 17 (1975):36-64. Tilly and Scott make an important point: working-class women in nineteenth-century European industrial society were invariably "torn between the cares of a mother and those of a worker." Given a choice working-class women "preferred to stay home and supervise their own families." (p. 463)

[33]Edouard Hamon, Les Canadiens-Français de la Nouvelle-Angleterre (Quebec, 1891), p. 14. My translation.

[34]Lowell tax assessment records for 1870 were also consulted. Household heads were supposed to declare possession of real or personal property to the assessment officer. The names of six of the ten men who reported property in the census appear in the assessment records. But not one of them reported owning property! This finding strongly suggests tax evasion, thereby indicating that assessment records are poor sources for determining property holdings among French Canadians. See Lowell Valuation Books, 1870.

but one were fathers. Children in these families were gainfully employed if they were older than age 13. Their fathers reported a range of personal property from $400 to $1500, the mean being $573. One carpenter in this group, in addition to reporting $700 in personal property, had $1700 in real property.[35] Two of his six children, daughters aged 16 and 17, worked in factories.

A very small proportion of working-class families, then--5 per cent of the family census sample--were amassing savings or property in 1870. Most were not. Father Hamon, a Jesuit priest who wrote about French Canadians in New England 20 years later, in 1890, thought he knew why. Working-class status was not the complete explanation. French Canadians, it seems, frittered away their earnings on le luxe--fine clothing, circuses, and buggy rides.[36] In 1882 several Lowell factory operatives remarked upon this tendency among French Canadians. But unlike Hamon they did not view this character trait with repugnance:

> It was universally asserted that they [French Canadians] dressed better than any other nationality, that there was more taste displayed in their general make-up, and that they spent more money for clothing than for food; a good deal of their money was spent in the Lowell stores.[37]

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[35]This man appears on the assessment rolls in 1870 but did not report any property to the city tax assessor.

[36]Hamon, Les Canadiens-Français, pp. 28-32.

[37]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 207.

Lowell French Canadians probably were spending some of their earnings in this fashion, on so-called luxury items. Families with secondary wage earners could doubtless afford a few such purchases. Nevertheless, this behavior, like the decisions regarding who worked outside the home in a family or arrangements for household sharing or boarding, does soften the interpretation of the standard of living analysis, for it shows that French Canadian working-class people, despite the often difficult circumstances of their lives, also controlled and shaped their destinies to a certain extent in terms of their own needs and expectations.

CHAPTER VII

COMMUNITY, CLASS, AND ETHNICITY

The Church was the community.[1]

The Priests said, "Well, you're going to live here. Well, you're going to organize."[2]

It is only the French-Canadian lower class, the ignorant ones, who scorn our language.[3]

"You're Irish. Get out of here and go home."[4]

Life in Lowell for working-class people in the 1870s was frequently onerous, at times debilitating. People, children included, worked 10 to 11 hours each day, six days a week, to earn wages which did not always support an adequate living standard.[5] A particular gloom enveloped the city in the mid-1870s, depression years: work was still available, but competition was keen. The uncertainty associated with the future of Lowell's economy contributed to the sense of anxiety and non-confidence

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[1]Levasseur, oral interview, p. 12.

[2]Morrisette, oral interview, p. 4.

[3]L'Etoile (Lowell), September 16, 1886.

[4]Levasseur, oral interview, p. 19.

[5]One in five of all children in Lowell aged 10 through 14 was gainfully employed in 1875. Eight hundred and sixty-six of the total children in Lowell in this age group (4062) worked--21 per cent. Census of Massachusetts, 1875, 1:6, 184, 640.

which many Lowellians shared whether they were members of the working class or the middle class.[6]

Some French-Canadian immigrants who had arrived in Lowell in the late 1860s or early 1870s left the city in the mid-1870s, either to look for work in other areas of New England or to return to Quebec. But some French Canadians remained, and newcomers appeared in the course of the decade. The depression was, after all, no respecter of national boundaries. Canada, as well as the United States, was affected. In terms of earning a livelihood, then, there might have been little reason to leave Lowell.[7] Once the depression lifted French Canadians poured into Lowell at a rather staggering rate. From a small colony of at most 2000 individuals in 1870, French Candians numbered 11,000 in 1881, about 18 per cent of Lowell's total population of 60,000.[8] Apart from job considerations, one factor which contributed to the decision of French Canadians either to remain in Lowell in the 1870s or to migrate there was the existence by the early 1870s of a strong ethnic community centered around a French-Canadian parish church.

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[6]See Ministry-at-Large reports for these years, which repeatedly stress that laboring poor people, despite valiant efforts to support themselves, often lived well below the subsistence level.

[7]See appendix E, "Real Wages" section.

[8]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 42.

I

French Canadians who came to Lowell after the American Civil War were prepared by their history to embrace the Catholic Church as the pivotal institution around which to build a community. Since the Conquest the Church in Quebec had worked diligently to keep French-Canadian ethnic identity alive. Immigrants just settling into a new society dominated by an English-speaking people with a protestant heritage could be expected, therefore, to turn to the Catholic Church for security and guidance--provided, of course, it offered the services of French-speaking priests.

Eighteen-sixty eight was a propitious time for French-Canadian Catholic missionary work in New England. By the late 1860s French-Canadian political and religious leaders cooperated with and even encouraged the founding of Catholic missions in New England. A more enthusiastic missionary zeal, however, emanated from New England at this time. The Breton-born bishop of Burlington, Vermont, Mgr. Louis de Goesbriand, stated unequivocably:

> We believe these immigrants are called by God to cooperate in the conversion of America as their ancestors were called upon to plant the Faith on the shores of the St. Lawrence.[9]

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[9]Quoted in Wade, "The French Parish and Survivance," p. 173.

He strongly recommended that French Canadians be provided churches with French-speaking priests. Otherwise, French Canadians, who did not feel comfortable in English-speaking, Irish-dominated Catholic churches, would fall away from the faith.[10] In 1868, Mgr. John Joseph Williams, the bishop of the diocese of Boston which included Lowell, heeded Goesbriand's advice. After completing a careful investigation of Lowell's French-Canadian population, Mgr. Williams became convinced of the desirability of establishing a French-language parish for French Canadians and requested that the missionary Oblate Brotherhood located in Quebec send some of their number down to Lowell.[11]

Two Oblates, Lucien Lagier and André-Marie Garin, arrived at the train station in Lowell on April 18, 1868, a Saturday. Father Michael O'Brien, pastor of St. Patrick's Church, a predominantly Irish congregation, served as their host. Father Garin, destined to provide a key leadership role in the French-Canadian community for many years to come, later recorded his impressions of his first encounter with Lowell French Canadians:

> There was a large meeting of this city's French Canadians over which I presided. The first thing I asked was: "Do you, my good friends, wish to form your own separate parish?" And, in unanimity, they responded: "Yes, we wish it." My second question was: "There are two churches for sale at this moment, one located near St. Patrick's Church, the other on Lee

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Santerre, Un peuple, p. 16.

> Street. Which one do you prefer?" And they responded unanimously: "The protestant church on Lee Street."[12]

St. Patrick's Church stood in the heart of the long-established Irish neighborhood, the Acre. The church for sale near St. Pat's was cheaper than the church for sale on Lee Street, but the Lee Street church was better constructed and could be enlarged more easily than the church in the Acre.[13] Nevertheless, it was actually further away from most French-Canadian residences than the church located in the Acre. A desire to distance themselves from their Irish co-religionists, even if this meant a longer walk to church, might, therefore, have been a factor in the unanimous decision of French Canadians to locate their parish outside of the Acre.

In all events French Canadians eagerly contributed their hard-earned money towards the purchase of a church. Within one week they raised $2,000. Seven days later the figure was $3,000, enough to cover the down-payment for the building on Lee Street. The success of this initial fund-raising drive is striking.[14]

French Canadians at this time had achieved a certain level of material well-being by virtue of their non-working class status, it was not they who provided most of the down-pay-

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[12]Quoted in Santerre, Un peuple, p. 16. My translation.

[13]Santerre, Un peuple, p. 12.

[14]Ibid., p. 17.

ment funds. This money came instead from "poor" French-Canadian workers. Father Garin made this point when he recalled how the first $2,000 was raised:

> Father O'Brien could scarcely believe his eyes: $2,000 almost all in one dollar bills. "Is this money you have borrowed from the bank?"
>
> "No, Father, it is our poor French Canadians who have contributed this and they have proven that they will give more."
>
> "And so Father Garin, you have certainly succeeded in your undertaking, because I swear to you that my people could never do as much."[15]

The importance of St. Joseph's parish for Lowell French Canadians can hardly be overestimated. From the outset it gave French Canadians an immediate sense of security in their new surroundings by providing cultural continuity with the society they had in a certain sense forsaken. For French Canadians the parish was more than a structure connecting individual churches with Rome. It represented the family orientation of their culture. The parish was a "larger home," and the pastor, in addition to his spiritual leadership, was the "respected father of an extended family interested in cooperating with him and fulfilling the duties of the family," These duties, as in a family, were wide-ranging. They could include helping

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[15]Quoted in ibid., p. 17. My translation.

to set up schools or organizing a picnic.[16] From the beginning St. Joseph's exhibited the character of a "larger home." As Father Garin's first encounter with Lowell French Canadians indicates, an extended-family understanding existed between prospective pastor and parishioners even before St. Joseph's was established. Father Garin quickly became the central figure in the French-Canadian community. Parish historian Richard Santerre has written:

> Father Garin became the true father of his people, devoted to their advancement and their well-being. For a quarter of a century he baptised and married them, took part in their joys and sorrows, and helped them find eternal rest.[17]

St. Joseph's presence in Lowell did more than encourage the maintenance of religious and familial values among French Canadians. It also set in motion the development of an institutional structure which provided French Canadians with needed social, economic, and educational services. Within a very short time two fraternal mutual benefit organizations, the St. Jean Baptiste Society (1869) and St. Joseph's Union (1871), were founded. Members con-

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[16] The word parish comes from parochia, meaning around families. See Sister Florence Marie Chevalier, S. S. A., "The Role of French National Societies in the Sociocultural Evolution of the Franco-American of New England from 1860 to the Present: An Analytical Macro-Sociological Case Study in Ethnic Integration Based on Current Social System Models" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1972), pp. 54-57.

[17] Santerre, Un peuple, p. 29 (second series pagination).

tributed monthly dues so that they could draw sickness benefits and widows or heirs could receive death payments. In 1875 an organization was established for married women, the Ladies of St. Anne, whose primary function was charitable. It divided Lowell into four sections, and to each it assigned two councillors and one nurse to visit homes. At the same time, two subsidiary organizations to the Ladies of St. Anne came into being, one for adolescent girls, the other for younger girls who had taken their first communion. Counterparts were organized for boys in 1876 and in 1878. The organization for boys aged 14 to 16, the Guardian Angels, sponsored 12 soirees between 1876 and 1878 to raise money for the parish. In 1878 the Association for Young Catholic Men was founded. Other organizations with more diverse goals also had their beginnings in this decade: a temperance association, a dramatic club, a literary society, a library, and a French-Canadian Chamber of Commerce. With the possible exception of the chamber of commerce all of these organizations were either founded by the church or had the backing of the church. In 1881 a small parochial school run by the Grey Nuns from Ottawa, Ontario, was set up; it had 253 students.[18]

The parish-centred, self-help associations which

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[18] Ibid., pp. 28-29, 36, 51; and Lowell City Directory, 1876. See also Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 42, on the parochial school.

French Canadians established in these years must have provided a modicum of material security. Records of charity disbursements in French-Canadian societies no longer exist, but records of one protestant interdenominational charity organization do. The Ministry-at-Large annual reports for the 1870s and 1880s show that French Canadians almost never asked for assistance from this group. The Lowell police department provided temporary relief--overnight lodging in the station house--for hundreds of jobless, penniless people each year. French Canadians hardly ever took advantage of this service. Nor were they found among the paupers and feebleminded listed in the Lowell Almshouse rolls.[19]

The presence of the church and the network of institutions surrounding and reinforcing it strongly influenced the way French Canadians comported themselves in the larger Lowell society in other ways. Father Morrisette commented in 1975 on the influence of the church on people's behavior in the early years:

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[19] See Ministry-at-Large reports for these years; and Documents of the City of Lowell, Annual Reports of the City Marshall and Annual Reports of the Superintendent of Almshouse, and House of Reformation for Juvenile Offenders for the 1870s. The following Irish charitable societies were listed in the 1870 city directory: the Irish Benevolent Society, the Sisters of Notre Dame, and St. Peter's School and Orphan Asylum. Lowell City Directory, 1870, pp. 327-29. St. John's Hospital was founded as a charity hospital in 1867 with mostly Irish backing; it was run by the Sisters of Charity but was non-denominational. Lowell City Directory, 1870, p. 328; and Lowell Daily Citizen and News, April 4, 1870; and April 8, 1870.

> The priests were always telling the people: be good citizens by keeping out of trouble and all that so that you have a good reputation and so on, that's very important.[20]

It appears that French Canadians heeded this advice. Anti-social behavior was virtually unknown: the canadiens were eminently law-abiding. Police records show that the most common crime in Lowell was public drunkenness. French Canadians were almost never arrested for this offense.[21] Perusal of the Lowell daily newspaper's weekly descriptions of court proceedings reveals that French Canadians rarely appeared in court on charges of rowdy behavior or physical fighting.[22] Similarly, juvenile delinquency was almost unknown among French-Canadian youth. The Lowell Reform School had only a handful of Canadians listed on its rolls in the 1870s; only one name appears to be French. There was one case of a "runaway" male youth, Canadian, surname not supplied, reported by the Lowell Almshouse during this period. The boy escaped from the reform school attached to the almshouse, according to the report, in order to rejoin his family which had moved back to Canada.[23]

French Canadians were as a group unobtrusive in

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[20] Morrisette, oral interview, p. 4.

[21] See Annual Reports of the Lowell City Marshall, 1870s.

[22] Lowell Daily Citizen and News, weekly court proceedings reports, 1868-1870.

[23] Annual Report of the Lowell Almshouse, 1870s. Regarding the runaway see Annual Report of the Lowell Almshouse, 1872, p. 11.

Lowell society in the 1870s. They kept to themselves for the most part, and they worked hard. The presence of the church and the institutional structure which developed around it reassured French Canadians and helped them cope pragmatically, almost stoically with the hardships and privations associated with working-class existence. This church-centered institutional structure also provided French Canadians with cultural continuity as well as a sense of purpose beyond immediate material considerations.

II

The rapidity with which St. Joseph's Church was founded in 1868 and the particular character traits French Canadians displayed when dealing with the larger Lowell society in the 1870s owed much to the widespread spontaneous support French Canadians gave their religious leaders. But the way the community developed and the behavior patterns of French Canadians also owed something to the presence of a small elite cadre within the French-Canadian population at this time. Most members of this cadre had close attachments to the parish. From the first days of St. Joseph's founding, an identifiable group of 20 men provided behind-the-scene counselling and direction. Besides helping to establish the parish these men were key figures in the church-sponsored organizations and societies which came into being in the 1870s. These individuals seem to have held a position at St. Joseph's analagous in

function to that held by the parish council (fabrique) in the Quebec Catholic Church structure. But in Quebec the members of the fabrique, who were in charge of administrative and financial affairs, were elected by the parishioners democratically. In the United States Catholic Church structure the institution of the parish council did not exist. Therefore, the men helping in fabrique fashion to run St. Joseph's did not have a formal legitimacy in relation to the Lowell parish congregation. These lay leaders resembled members in Quebec parish councils, however, in that they had more prestigious occupations than the adult male population in Lowell as a whole: in 1870, 5 were petty proprietors, 7 were skilled workers, 1 was a clerk, and only 4 were unskilled workers. Seven of these 20 individuals had been part of the petite population canadienne which had settled in Lowell before the Civil War.[24]

Although it is difficult to gauge the extent to which the attitudes of this parish lay elite differed from or reflected the values of ordinary French Canadians, there is reason to believe that initially at least all French Canadians in Lowell shared some of the same values and aspirations. All immigrants sought a better life--one which was materially more secure. From the start, too,

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[24]This group of 20 was compiled from Santerre's parish history, Un peuple. Their names were linked to the 1870 manuscript census and to Lowell City Directories for the 1860s and 1870s. Three of these 20 could not be located in either the census or the directories.

French Canadians in Lowell shared a feeling of being set apart in North American society by their particular history and culture. They wished to maintain this sense of separateness in America as they had in their native land, even if this involved some material sacrifices. This value is most easily demonstrated in the grassroots support and funding for the construction of St. Joseph's in 1868. French-Canadian strategy for maintaining a separate identity in America came from the Quebec experience--a wedding of faith, language, and ethnicity. For this reason French Canadians preferred their own French-speaking church to any of the three Catholic churches already established in Lowell. These were unacceptable for two main reasons: first, they were English-speaking, and second, they had predominantly Irish congregations.[25]

Beneath the groundswell enthusiasm for ethnic survival via a French-Canadian parish and an associated institutional community structure was another value, which, if it did not exactly contradict survivance, certainly made allegiance to it more complex. In the 1870s and 1880s the French-Canadian community elite, the core of which consisted of the parish religious and lay leaders, supported the idea that French Canadians remain true canadiens but urged also that they become American citizens and strive

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[25]Wade, "The French Parish and Survivance," p. 178.

for socio-economic betterment in their new surroundings.[26] To understand how this attitude developed it is instructive to look briefly at the activities and programs of the French-Canadian supra-local organizations which came into being in these years.

In 1865 the first convention of French-Canadian societies in the United States occurred. Thereafter, representatives from various service associations, primarily but not exclusively from St. Jean Baptiste Societies, met at annual General Conventions until 1876. Delegates were mainly from New England but some came from New York and others came from as far away as Illinois and Michigan. Lowell French Canadians participated in national associations as early as 1868. Although no General Conventions took place in 1877, 1878, and 1879, meetings recommenced in the 1880s, once every two years. One convention was held in 1893 and one in 1901. Lowell delegates appeared regularly at these meetings. The French-Canadian Mutual Aid Union of the United States met at the same time as the General Convention. This national association of benefit societies did not, however, survive into the 1880s. For most years in the 1870s delegates from the St. Jean Baptiste Society and St. Joseph's Union in Lowell attended

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[26] Santerre, Un peuple, p. 36, and Morrisette, oral interview, p. 4. See also Souvenir: 25ieme anniversaire L'Union St. Joseph de Lowell Massachusetts, 1871-1896 (Lowell, n.d.), which provides capsule biographies of several community leaders as well as a brief description of French-Canadian community development.

these meetings. In 1873, on St. Jean Baptiste Day, the Lowell French-Canadian community hosted the Massachusetts Congress of French Canadians. According to Santerre the meeting and celebrations surrounding it were "a great success" because it gave Lowell French Canadians a stronger sense of closeness and helped them feel what they could accomplish through unity.[27] Lowell French Canadians, along with others, also made journeys to Quebec for the annual St. Jean Baptiste celebrations. In 1874 about 10,000 French-Canadian residents of New England, Lowell people among them, attended June 24th festivities in Montreal.[28]

Two major goals informed these various regional and national associations and the activities which they sponsored--survivance and adaptation to American life. Projects for furthering survivance were organized around the concept of institutional dualism--development of French-Canadian parochial schools, libraries, mutual aid societies, and French-language newspapers. The desire for partial

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[27]Santerre, Un peuple, p. 36.

[28]The material in this paragraph on supra-local organizations among French Canadians has been gleaned from Félix Gatineau, Historique des Conventions Générales des Canadiens-Francais aux Etats Unis, 1865-1901 (Woonsocket, Rhode Island, 1927), pp. 6-7, 10-11, 15, 28-29, 32, 50, 79, 117-18, 135-37, 234-35, 280, 292, 294, 355-56. Chevalier's thesis, "The Role of French National Societies," also provides much material on French-Canadian national societies. See in addition Edward Billings Ham, "French National Societies in New England, New England Quarterly 12 (June, 1939):315-22.

Americanization was expressed through endorsement of naturalization for French Canadians who intended to live permanently in the United States. A preoccupation with material improvement was also in evidence; delegates discussed each year methods for raising the socio-economic position of French Canadians as a group in American society.[29]

The methods which were suggested at these conventions for upgrading the low socio-economic status of most French Canadians at this time revealed the class bias of the delegates. The individuals who attended these meetings were middle-class French Canadians, usually businessmen or professionals. A commitment to their own class interests, in addition to their loyalty to survivance, influenced the kind of advice they gave to working-class French Canadians. Rather than join labor unions French-Canadian workers were told to patronize the shops and offices of their fellow (middle-class) countrymen. Rather than send their children to public schools where they would learn English and other skills conducive to upward social mobility in American society, parochial schools were suggested. French Canadians were also charged with the responsibility of becoming American citizens.[30]

Lowell French-Canadian community leaders possessed

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[29]Gatineau, Historique, pp. 28-29, 292.

[30]Ibid., pp. 32-33, 292.

the set of attitudes put forward in supra-local organizations and organized their activities accordingly. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s they labored assiduously to promote survivance by helping to establish the parish-related institutions already discussed. In 1886 a permanent French-language newspaper, L'Etoile, appeared in Lowell, founded by the elite literary society Le Cercle Canadien.[31] One of the first editorials shows how the survivance theme was combined in the minds of the paper's editors with material goals:

> Our newspaper has been founded for the local and commercial interests of all French Canadians . . . . L'Etoile is especially devoted to promoting this particular goal, a desire which is shared by all sincere patriots.[32]

Other editorials helped to explain what patriotism meant within the Lowell French-Canadian context. It meant taking out American citizenship--two French-Canadian naturalization clubs existed for this purpose in 1886. It meant patronizing French-Canadian businesses and professions. Finally, it meant supporting the parish church and other community institutions.[33] The way these points were expressed had a bitter, contemptuous quality which suggests that economic inequalities and the sense of class which resulted from this were creating tensions in the French-

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[31] Santerre, Un peuple, p. 36.

[32] L'Etoile (Lowell), September 16, 1886.

[33] Ibid., September 16, 1886 and September 30, 1886.

Canadian community by this time. For instance, one editorial fulminated against members of the lazy basse classe who, in sending their children to the mills instead of to parochial school, were forefeiting their children's future as well as the cause of survivance.[34] Another accused the same basse classe of "scorning" the French language.[35] A third editorial pointed out that with a population of 11,000 there were only 400 registered voters. The editors felt there could be at least 1200. Without the vote, French Canadians, the editorial board reasoned, could not look after their economic and political interests adequately.[36] French Canadians as a group, then, from this middle-class perspective, were less than enthusiastic defenders of survivance, and their behavior was impeding their chances for upward social mobility.

Spokesmen for the small but self-conscious French-Canadian middle class had a point: by the 1880s working-class French Canadians were organizing their lives in accordance with values which differed in some respects from those of middle-class community leaders. As the L'Etoile editors noted, adult men showed little enthusiasm for taking out citizenship even if they had resided in the United

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[34]Ibid., September 30, 1886.

[35]Ibid., September 16, 1886.

[36]Ibid.

States the required five years, and parents continued to send their children to work, not school.[37] For those who remained a number of years in Lowell, the lack of interest in citizenship probably reflected a feeling of being outsiders in American society. The prevalence of child labor doubtless indicated the need of working-class families to adapt an inherited cultural value to a new way of life which was very different from that of the more "arrived" middle class.

Ironically the tendency of working-class families to rely on child labor may have been strengthened by the model provided by some community leaders who had used their own children's wages to achieve middle-class status. Félix Albert provides an apt example. Because he sent several of his children into the mills when he arrived in Lowell in 1887, he rapidly quitted the occupation of wood chopper to become the owner of groceries, furniture stores, and tenements. He eventually helped one of his sons establish a funeral business. Albert retired with his wife and youngest children to a farm outside Lowell in his declining years.[38]

Even though the French-Canadian working-class inter-

[37]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1882, p. 43, and L'Etoile, September 16, 1886.

[38]Albert, Histoire.

pretation of life was clearly not always identical to that of the middle-class one, the example of Albert shows that middle-class French Canadians might have exaggerated ideological differences between classes in the 1880s. Albert, who had been a habitant in Quebec, brought his entrepreneurial behavior and success ethic with him. He did not need long-time residency in Lowell to prepare him ideologically and psychologically for his business career. All French Canadians in Lowell had recently left a society which, though still predominantly rural, was modernizing and industrializing. The so-called "American" promise of success through hard work and self-improvement was not an alien notion in Quebec at this time.

The guarded promise of material betterment and social-status improvement propounded by Lowell's native-American middle class also surely influenced all French-Canadian immigrants in this era. The Lowell view of the success ethic stressed the virtues of ambition, honesty, frugality, and hard work. It also emphasized the need for children to be given formal schooling to prepare them for success in an urban, industrial setting. Most French Canadians began their lives in Lowell in working-class occupations. They appear to have had a certain respect for most of the success virtues so lauded by Lowell's middle-class leaders. The value of formal schooling was, however, for the cultural-practical reasons already discussed,

largely ignored by French-Canadians who were working class. Once French Canadians achieved non-working class status, the value of providing children with a formal education beyond a minimal level became important. These French Canadians, then, experienced a form of assimilation into American society which their working-class countrymen and women did not. Working-class people could not afford the luxury of changing their attitude about schooling.

Unfortunately, given the limited occupational opportunities in areas like Lowell where French Canadians were settling, it would not be possible for many in this immigrant group to experience significant upward social mobility in the latter decades of the nineteenth century: in 1900 roughly three-quarters of all French Canadians living in New England were "in regions where the textile industry was the basic element in the lives of the majority of the immigrant group."[39] The small number who managed to achieve middle-class status would over time become increasingly comfortable with mainstream goals and aspirations of American society and modify their behavior and values accordingly. Working-class French Canadians would move along this continuum, too. They already had some values associated with the American success ethic when they first arrived; these notions were reinforced by living in

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[39] Vicaro, "Immigration of French Canadians to New England," p. 316.

American society and through contact with upwardly-mobile individuals in their communities. Nevertheless, working-class status undoubtedly slowed the pace at which French Canadians allowed themselves to change.

III

In the 1870s and 1880s, despite the complaints of Lowell's French-Canadian elite, survivance or ethnic identity created a more intense feeling of solidarity and commitment among French Canadians than membership in the working class did. French Canadians accepted low wages, inferior working and living conditions, and child labor. They did not express sympathy for or extend aid to the movement for a ten-hour day in Lowell textile mills in the 1870s.[40] Their priorities lay elsewhere. French Canadians sacrificed hard-earned wages to build a church and to support parish institutions. They spent time and money on visits back to Quebec, and they helped new immigrants establish themselves in Lowell. They also frequently left

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[40]French Canadians in other textile towns also failed to support this movement. Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Twelfth Annual Report, 1881, pp. 464-69. Daniel J. Walkowitz points out that French-Canadian cotton mill workers in Cohoes, New York, failed to protest wage reductions in the 1870s but organized spontaneously and rapidly in 1880 and again in 1882 with Irish workers to resist wage cuts. He shows that French Canadians used their energy in the 1870s to settle into Cohoes and to establish a strong community. These years also saw the development of a sense of class which transcended ethnic identity and allowed for French-Canadian-Irish cooperation in the 1880 and 1882 strikes. See Walkowitz, Worker City, Company Town, pp. 191-92, 219-29.

Lowell after only short-term residency which militated against the possibility of developing a sense of class which could transcend the already existing prejudices against people of other ethnicities.

French Canadians, whether they left Lowell or remained, harbored feelings of ill-will especially towards the Irish, many of whom were also working class. The French-Canadian quarrel with and resentment of the Irish revolved around different attitudes towards Catholic Church polity. Plain jealousy entered into the picture, too. Even if many Irish people were, like the French Canadians, in working-class occupations, they had as a group lived in Lowell since the 1840s and were thus in a position to procure better jobs than French Canadians, particularly in the textile factories. These tensions helped to preclude--for a time at least--a sense of unity between French Canadians and Irish people based on shared working-class experiences.

There was, nonetheless, a countervailing tendency in French-Canadian-Irish relations in the 1870s. Religious leaders in both communities endeavored to create a cooperative spirit among the French Canadians and the Irish, and their efforts met with a certain degree of success. One Irish Catholic priest, Father O'Brien, extended his services to Fathers Garin and Lagier when they first came to Lowell to establish St. Joseph's. Within a year of his arrival, Garin, along with other Oblate brothers, helped

to establish the Community of the Immaculate Conception which had under its jurisdiction two parishes, St. Joseph's for French Canadians and St. John's for the Irish. The Oblates, who were French, French-Canadian, and Irish, shared the same presbytere in the 1870s. In 1873 St. Joseph's and St. John's were enlarged. Two contractors were hired, French-Canadian Pascal Harnois and Irishman Patrick Corcoran.[41] In 1880 the Oblates established a small parochial school with six classrooms for children whose parents belonged to St. Joseph's or St. John's; four classrooms were in English, two in French. One year later the Oblates, following Garin's suggestion, opened a separate French-Canadian parochial school.[42] The Irish priests in the other churches--St. Pat's, St. Peter's, and St. Mary's--worked closely with the Oblates when occasions for cooperation arose. In 1868, the French-Canadian parish, along with the Irish ones, participated in a fair sponsored to raise money for St. John's Hospital, an Irish charity institution founded in 1867.[43] In 1874, when Father O'Brien--"the first friend of the French Canadians in Lowell"--died, a delegation from St. Joseph's attended the funeral.[44]

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[41] Santerre, Un peuple, p. 4, 24-26, 32.

[42] Ibid., p. 35.

[43] Lowell Daily Citizen and News, November 27-30, 1868.

[44] Santerre, Un peuple, p. 28. My translation.

French-Canadian and Irish community leaders, lay as well as religious, also organized other formal contacts between the two nationalities. St. Patrick's Day had for long been celebrated in Lowell. Already in 1870, St. Jean Baptiste Day, the national holiday of Quebec, was an established event in Lowell. The Lowell Daily Citizen reported favorably on the festivities. The Irish Erina Concert Band contributed to the day's entertainment. Members of the band doubtless partook of refreshments at the close of the day and socialized with French Canadians. Other Lowellians might also have been drawn to the event:

> St. John's Day, in this city, was celebrated by the French Canadians with high mass at St. Joseph's Church in the morning, and by an entertainment in Huntington Hall in the evening. In the morning the church was well fitted, and in the evening at a little past seven o'clock the procession was formed on Lee street, and headed by the Erina Concert Band marched to the Hall, where the entertainment commenced at about eight o'clock. A drama entitled "Le Pascrit," performed by some of the members is said to have been creditably rendered, and the refreshments which were served to those in attendance heightened the enjoyment of the occasion. The hall was well filled, and the members of the society who had spared no pains to entertain their visitors, made the affair every way successful.[45]

Such well-intentioned, apparently pleasant group encounters between Irish and French-Canadian people were not so frequent at a one-to-one level. As individuals the French Canadians and the Irish tended to shun overly close contact with each other, as their differential residence

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[45] Lowell Daily Citizen and News, June 25, 1870.

patterns illustrate. If French Canadians and the Irish lived in the same neighborhood a rough balance in numbers between the two usually existed. If strong Irish clustering occurred, in the Acre or in the Chapel Hill area for instance, French Canadians preferred to live elsewhere. The upper part of Little Canada, on the other hand, where French Canadians were heavily clustered in 1880, does not appear to have been a popular area for the Irish or people of other nationalities to settle. The lower part of Little Canada, in contrast, where fewer French Canadians resided, had a large number of Irish and American (or English) residents.

Tensions related to occupational competitiveness between French Canadians and Irish people could erupt rather easily into brawling and street fighting. Irish boys had a reputation in Lowell for terrorizing French-Canadian children who might be out in the streets at lunchtime or in the early evening running errands for their parents.[46] But French-Canadian children could turn the tables. One person recalled her brother's stern warning to an Irish youth: "You're Irish. Get out of here and go home." A fight ensued with black eyes the inevitable result.[47] According to Father Morrisette a commitment to ethnic exclusiveness triggered aggressive behavior between

[46]Peter F. Blewett, "The New People," in Cotton was King, ed. by Eno, pp. 212-13.

[47]Levasseur, oral interview, p. 19.

French Canadian and Irish youth:

> . . . There's always the matter of when you stick together too much . . . all the other groups are your enemies. It starts with fights or insults and so on to throwing rocks. The North Common was the battleground between the Irish and the French. Of course, the Irish were here first too, so they had their troubles when they first came in . . .[48]

Children assumed the prejudices of their parents and appear to have retained them as adults, one indication being that in the 1870s French-Canadian young people almost never chose non-French Canadians as marriage partners.[49] Job competitiveness and a priori loyalty to the idea of ethnic exclusiveness, which was heightened by a strong aversion to Protestantism, the religious orientation of most Lowellians, were the major factors which discouraged inter-ethnic marriages. Nevertheless, the lack of French-Canadian-Irish weddings has still not been adequately explained. Regardless of the very real antagonisms between these two nationalities and their different interpretations

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[48]Morrisette, oral interview, p. 11.

[49]All marriages which took place in 1870, 1872, 1874, 1876, 1878, and 1880 in Lowell in which at least one of the partners was French Canadian were considered. The Lowell marriage records reveal that 93 per cent of French Canadians in this sample--636 of 684--chose to marry other French Canadians. Four per cent, 26 individuals, chose American-born partners who had French surnames, indicating probable French-Canadian ancestry. The remaining 3 per cent, 22 individuals, married people who had been born in the following countries: America (11), Canada (6), England (2), Ireland (2), and France (1). Practically all French-Canadian couples got married at St. Joseph's, while over half of the "mixed" marriages also took place at the French-Canadian parish church. Evidently in the 1870s the choice of a non-French-Canadian spouse was not usually a threat to ethno-religious identity.

of church structure and polity, social contacts between them were not uncommon. As already demonstrated, French Canadian and Irish people came together formally in a fairly regular and ostensibly peaceful manner, usually under the sponsorship of their respective religious leaders. There is perhaps yet another factor, then, which could have helped to discourage inter-marriage between these two groups in this era.

French-Canadian and Irish people had very different codes of social behavior which might have estranged young people from each other. French Canadians avoided accepting charity or assistance from outsiders (non-French Canadians). If a French Canadian needed help he or she was expected to turn to the family, the parish, or community organizations, not to institutions which had been created by the municipal government or private associations for this purpose. The Irish, on the other hand, had no such compunctions. They frequently requested aid from city authorities and public or private charities, even the Ministry-at-Large, a Protestant organization. Except for street fighting on the part of children and adolescents, French Canadians also eschewed aggressive or destructive social behavior. They were not arrested for public drunkenness, nor did they find themselves before court on assault charges. The Irish, however, were often arrested for public drunkenness, and

frequently appeared in court to face charges of rowdyness and physical fighting, women as well as men.[50] People who differed culturally from each other in these fundamental ways would have found the marriage relationship extremely problematic even if they had not had to contend with the rather generalized aura of rivalry and mistrust which characterized relations among all nationality groups in late-nineteenth century urban-industrial American society.

IV

French Canadians who came to Lowell in the 1870s and 1880s found a parish-centered community to which they could easily attach themselves. The community provided a sense of belonging, of psychological security. It offered welfare assistance and limited educational services, and it organized various social-recreational programs. The religious and lay leaders of the community functioned at times as a conveyer belt, connecting French Canadians to the larger Lowell society. This was more true in the realm of value orientation than in the realm of civic or social participation in the city's native-American-dominated institutions, although one French Canadian, Samuel P. Marin, who had begun his life in Lowell as a corporation recruiting agent, did serve on the city council in 1874.[51]

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[50] See Annual Reports of the City Marshall, 1870s; and Lowell Daily Citizen and News, weekly court proceedings reports, 1868-70.

[51] Lowell City Directory, 1874, p. 397.

French-Canadian community leaders were more concerned in this era with proselytizing values and expectations related to socio-economic betterment; those who attained middle-class status pointed to their own modest achievements as models for working-class French Canadians to emulate.[52] Nevertheless, their number remained small which meant that French Canadians relied heavily on the services of English-speaking, usually native-American, merchants and professionals in these years.[53]

A certain independence of mind characterized "the plain people" of the French-Canadian community. At times their behavior met with the disapproval of the community's elite. The decision of many working-class parents to send their children to the mills instead of to parochial (or public) shcools grated on the nerves of some upwardly-mobile community spokesmen. Evidently, too, some working-class French Canadians spent more of their wages in non-French-Canadian shops and offices in the 1880s than French-Canadian businessmen and professionals thought necessary. The notion of survivance could at times have pecuniary undertones.

The tendency among working-class French Canadians

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[52]Santerre, Un peuple, pp. 11-35 passim.

[53]The Irish businessman was becoming a significant presence in certain retail trades like groceries and variety stores in the 1870s and 1880s. See Peter F. Blewett, "The New People," in Cotton Was King, ed. by Eno, p. 214.

to disregard the advice of their community leaders if it conflicted with their own interests or established habits created class tensions but did not really divide the French-Canadian community along self-conscious class lines in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. By the twentieth century, however, this situation might have been changing. In the 1890s and 1900s, when French Canadians became involved in municipal politics, they generally bloc-voted for either the native-American Republican Party or the Irish-led Democratic Party, depending upon how issues related to ethnic interests were presented.[54] In 1903 the United Textile Union came to Lowell to organize workers. French-Canadian community leaders opposed unionization, and French-Canadian workers were only lukewarm supporters of the strike which resulted from this ultimately futile attempt to unionize; many French Canadians left the city.[55] In 1911, however, when the Republican Party endorsed a city commission plan as an alternative to ward politics the French-Canadian community split politically along class lines: middle-class French Canadians supported the Republican Party, while working-class French Canadians supported the Irish-controlled Democratic Party which defended the continuation of ward politics in the interests of working-

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[54] Mary H. Blewett, "Mills and Multitudes," in Cotton Was King, ed. by Eno, pp. 174-76.

[55] Brown, "Decline and Fall," in Cotton Was King, ed. by Eno, pp. 148-53.

class constituencies.[56] The behavior of French-Canadian workers in the unsuccessful organizing drive of the Industrial Workers of the World in 1912 in the Lowell textile industry has not, unfortunately, been investigated. It is unclear at this point the extent to which loyalty to class might have been conflicting with loyalty to ethnic identity among Lowell French-Canadian workers by this time.[57] But the fact that French-Canadian workers endorsed the Irish-led Democratic Party in 1911 appears significant. An understanding of the way in which ethnicity and class functioned in the Lowell French-Canadian community in this later period awaits subsequent research.

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[56] Mary H. Blewett, "Mills and Multitudes," in Cotton Was King, ed. by Eno, pp. 176-181 passim.

[57] Loyalty to one's ethnicity does not of course preclude consciousness of and loyalty to one's class. It is, in other words, never possible to state in the abstract that a sense of class will take precedence over a sense of ethnicity or vice-versa. It is only within the context of specific historical situations and events that this question is answered, and then it is only answered for that paritcular set of circumstances. Nevertheless, when the actions of people are considered over time the prevailing tendency in the modern era is for people to define themselves "in class ways." See E. P- Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English," in The Socialist Register, ed. by Ralph Miliband and John Saville (London, 1965), p. 357.

CONCLUSION

The story of the French Canadians who came to Lowell in the 1870s and 1880s parallels the story of many other immigrant groups who came to America in the nineteenth century to seek a better life. From a material point of view, day to day existence, both at work and at home, was often harsh, but at the same time a common cultural heritage brought immigrants together, giving them a sense of unity and cushioning them against much of the trauma and alienation of a new industrial working-class way of life.

French Canadians who settled in New England, however, had an advantage European immigrants did not: only a few hundred miles, rather than several thousand, separated them from their native land. Proximity to Quebec gave them a certain self-assurance in their new surroundings. French Canadians could feel that their old way of life had not been totally abandoned. They could, and did, make frequent journeys back to Quebec to visit relatives and to participate in cultural events like St. Jean Baptiste Day. Some returned to Quebec to sit out "hard times." New immigrants from Quebec streamed across the boarder in good years. Cultural renewal was, then an on-going process. This ability

of French Canadians to maintain intimate contact with their native culture suggests that those who became permanent residents in New England would modify their behavior, ideas, and feelings about life more slowly and reluctantly than European immigrants who had an ocean between themselves and their homeland.[1]

In Lowell existence was difficult for French Canadians in the late 1860s and 1870s. Most became part of the city's working-class and held, to a greater extent than other working-class people, unskilled, low-paying jobs. Anxieties related to basic survival haunted many homes. Working conditions were deplorable in the textile factories where many women and children were employed. Work days were long, buildings were overheated, and machines often lacked proper safety features. Housing conditions varied, but French Canadians frequently lived in poorly constructed, overcrowded buildings in surroundings which were filthy and unsanitary. Poor working and living conditions contributed to a high death rate among French Canadians, especially among children.

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[1] See Elliott Robert Barkan, "Proximity and Commuting Immigration: An Hypothesis Explored via the Bi-Polar Ethnic Communities of French Canadians and Mexican Americans," in American Ethnic Revival, ed. by Jack Kinton (Aurora, Illinois, 1977), pp. 163-83.

Life could be grim, even brutal for these new immigrants, but they did not sit back and become passive victims. Instead, they relied a good deal on past cultural experiences--on traditional institutions and inherited patterns of thought and behavior--to help them shape and control their new lives.

From the outset the family functioned as the primary organizational institution. French Canadians generally came to Lowell as members of nuclear families. Even if individuals came down alone they usually encountered kin, friends, or old neighbors from home. The assistance businessman became an important figure, too. For immigrants who could not depend on the comfort and aid of family or friends in the initial, potentially disorienting settling-in process, he provided a kind of surrogate kin-friend connection.

Another important organizing institution which French Canadians depended upon was the Catholic Church. By 1868 St. Joseph's was a reality; it got spontaneous backing as well as financial support from most French Canadians in Lowell. Along with the family, it provided cultural continuity with the French-Canadian heritage and served as a source of psychological stability. St. Joseph's quickly became the focal point for community development. The parish sponsored social-service and benefit associations and began a parochial school system. It created conditions

conducive to the formation of a small lay elite which achieved a certain legitimacy in the community because its functions resembled those of the Quebec parish fabrique in some respects.

French Canadians used and modified values as well as institutions to accommodate to life in Lowell. The notion of survivance had strong appeal. In the early years especially, a sense of peoplehood brought French Canadians together to build their French-language church and to organize their parish-based community institutions. A commitment to survivance contributed to the desire of immigrants to live in French-Canadian neighborhoods and to see young people choose French-Canadian marriage partners.

French Canadians adapted the idea of the family farm economy to suit the exigencies of an urban-industrial, working-class existence. The mother's work place continued to be the home, although she sometimes supplemented family income by taking in boarders. Children, generally from the age of 11, earned wages which they contributed to the family. In this way families maintained traditional husband-wife and parent-child relationships; at the same time, many families escaped absolute want. Larger families--those with several older working children--could afford some luxuries, a few fine clothes, a sewing machine, or a visit back to Quebec.

It is difficult to determine how French Canadians felt about "getting ahead" in Lowell society in the late 1860s and 1870s. Structurally, opportunities were limited in Lowell because of the preeminence of the textile industry: most jobs were working-class jobs. Nevertheless, the Irish by the 1870s were moving into textile managerial positions and into ownership of certain retail trades. Upward class movement for some French Canadians, therefore, was a possibility. However, were French Canadian immigrants initially highly motivated to achieve some form of social mobility? While this question cannot be definitively answered here, some observations are in order. It is important to keep in mind that French Canadians came from a society which was predominantly rural and which stressed the primacy of the family as the basic productive unit. This heritage encouraged French Canadians in Quebec to emphasize the maintenance and well-being of the family as such rather than upward mobility plans and expectations for individuals within the family. French Canadians, if they came to Lowell directly from a rural environment, then, would not initially have envisaged a life for their children which would have varied greatly from their own lives. In other words, if a father in Lowell was working class, it would be culturally acceptable and even culturally expected that his children would be working class, too. However, this line of thought may lead to the erroneous conclusion that French Canadians came from

a "peasant society" with "very low horizons of expectations."[2] It ignores the fact that by the 1870s the processes of agricultural modernization and industrialization in Quebec were modifying older, rural-based economic and social structures and values. Families coming to Lowell from modernizing, rural areas of Quebec or from an industrial center like Montreal might very well have possessed ambitions related to a desire for upward job mobility or for material wealth for themselves or their children.

A certain ambivalence, therefore, doubtless characterized the attitudes of many French-Canadians towards the American success ethic. In terms of this study, ambivalence toward or uneasiness with the notion of getting ahead is illustrated in French-Canadian attitudes towards work and schooling. Working-class families relied on child labor to secure a livelihood as a unit. Schooling was cut short so that children could contribute wages to the family economy. Gainfully employed children had little opportunity to prepare themselves for non-working-class jobs. Nonetheless, it appears that the earning power of children sometimes enabled fathers to move into middle-class pursuits. Such

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[2] Stephan Thernstrom, "Urbanization, Migration, and Social Mobility in Late Nineteenth-Century America, in Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History, ed. by Barton J. Bernstein (New York, 1967; Vintage Books, 1969), pp. 161-62.

fathers were then in a position to help their sons secure non-working-class livelihoods. Some upwardly mobile men also began to reject the traditional notion of the family economy: they criticized child labor and urged parents to send their offspring to schools instead so that they could escape working-class status.

It will be important to investigate in greater depth the general problem of how French Canadians modified their culture over time to meet the challenges of their new environment. Such an investigation will need to look more closely at French-Canadian culture in Quebec. It will also need to compare the French-Canadian cultural accommodation experience with the experience of other immigrant groups in Lowell. At this point only the tip of the iceberg has emerged. Much work remains to be done.

APPENDIX A

USE OF THE 1870 UNITED STATES MANUSCRIPT CENSUS RETURNS

The manuscript census returns for 1870 provide a rich source for studying the lives of ordinary individuals. Census marshalls listed the name, age, sex, race, and birthplace of all individuals in each household in their assigned districts. They supplied additional information on some individuals: occupation, citizenship status, real or personal property holdings, school attendance, parentage (if foreign), and illiteracy. If a person was deaf, dumb, blind, or insane, marshalls reported this fact.[1]

The 1870 manuscript census returns have been consulted in this thesis to investigate some aspects of French-Canadian life in Lowell--occupational distribution, household composition, and family structure. Initially, all information for Canadian-born individuals contained in the manuscript census for Lowell was coded as well as all information for non-Canadian-born individuals who

[1] A crucial source for anyone interested in working with nineteenth-century manuscript census returns is Carroll D. Wright, History and Growth of the United States Census (Washington, D.C., 1900).

lived in households in which Canadians resided. Next, this data was organized for eventual computer analysis according to a program based on SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).[2] A technique was then developed to distinguish French Canadians from all other Canadians and to establish a French-Canadian census sample (see chapter 3). Finally, methodologies were created to study occupational distribution, household composition, and family structure (see chapter 5 and appendices B and C).

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[2]William R. Klecka, et al., Statistical Package for the Social Sciences: Primer (New York, 1975); Norman H. Nie, et al., Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 2nd ed. (New York, 1975); and Donald E. Ginter, Frederick A. Bode, and Peter Grogano, "A Review of Optimal Input Methods: Fixed Field, Free Field, and the Edited Text," Historical Methods Newsletter 10 (Fall, 1977): 166-76.

APPENDIX B

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION

The classification scheme in this appendix presents a modified version of the Philadelphia Social History Project VERTs. This modified system is entitled Lowell French-Canadian Project VERT (LFCPVERT). Several of the LFCPVERTs do not appear in table 23, below, since French Canadians did not have jobs in these areas of employment in 1870. The omitted categories are manufacturer and builder/contractor; high-white collar/managerial; and public service employee. The no occupation category has not been included because the concern in this chapter is with the occupational classification of persons gainfully employed. For this reason the keeping house category representing 185 females has also been omitted.

TABLE 23

CLASSIFICATION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN OCCUPATIONS BY LFCPVERTs, 1870

Occupational Category	No.
Professional:	
Physician	3
Commercial:	
Dry goods dealer	1
Trader	3

TABLE 23--Continued

Occupational Category	No.
Proprietary:	
Farmer	9
Keeps huckster shop	1
Saloon keeper	1
Para-professional:	
Inventor	1
Low-white collar:	
Clerk clothing store	1
Clerk dry goods	1
Clerk grocery	3
Clerk in store	6
Overseer cotton mill	2
Skilled crafts:	
Baker	2
Barber	2
Blacksmith	4
Box maker	2
Brick mason	2
Cabinet maker	3
Carpenter	36
Cordwainer	1
Dress maker	2
Iron worker	2
Lumberman	5
Machinist	14

TABLE 23--Continued

Occupational Category	No.
Machinist apprentice	3
Moulder	1
Painter	11
Sash and blind maker	1
Seamstress	1
Stone cutter	1
Stone mason	3
Tailoress	2
Wheelwright	1
Wood sawyer	1
Unskilled specified:	
Cardwirer	1
Does housework	1
Domestic servant	14
Hostler	1
Housekeeper	10
Teamster	1
Tends stone crusher	1
Watchman	1
Wood chopper	3
Unskilled unspecified:	
Common laborer	144
Other unskilled (manufacturing):	
Works bobbin shop	6
Works braid mill	3

TABLE 23-Continued

Occupational Category	No.
Other unskilled (manufacturing):	
Works in cotton mill	395
Works in woolen mill	19
Works Ayer Pill Factory	1
Works card shop	1
Works carpet mill	1
Works cotton yard	1
Works foundry yard	1
Works hosiery mill	3
Works in ink factory	1
Works in printing office	1
Works in mill	2
Works in saw mill	1
Works in ware shop	2
Works mill yard	2
Works print yard	1
Works tin shop	1
Other unskilled (non-manufacturing):	
Farm laborer	1
Works in bake house	1
Works at home	1
Works in laundry	1
Works in store	1
Works on farm	6
Site or product only:	
Cotton mill	1

TABLE 23--Continued

Occupational Category	No.
Site or product only:	
Fruit and variety store	1
Machine shop	1
Provision store	1
Variety store	1
Unclassifiable:	
Works farmer	1
Total	767

SOURCE: U.S. Manuscript Census Returns, Lowell, 1870, French-Canadian Sample.

APPENDIX C

USE OF OCCUPATIONAL DATA IN THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE CENSUS OF 1875

The Massachusetts State Census of 1875 classifies occupations of each city and town into seven categories: government and professional; domestic and personal service; trade and transportation; agriculture and fisheries; manufacturers and mechanical industries; indefinite, non-productive and propertied; and occupation not given. Under each category male and female figures appear separately. The classification system is not constructed on hierarchical-status assumptions. For example, merchants and teamsters are put under trade and transportation, manufacturers and factory operatives under manufactures and mechanical industries, and undertakers and washerwomen under domestic and personal service.

Besides providing a comprehensive classification system for all occupations in Massachusetts in 1875, the state census contains a list of "selected occupations" for each town and city. For Lowell, this list designates the occupations of 31,927 people, 1,859 less than the total employed population of 33,786. Because this list exists the occupational distribution of the Lowell workforce in 1875 could be determined. It was also possible

to classify occupations of French Canadians in 1870 according to this census system. The occupational distribution of French Canadians thus achieved could then be compared with the overall occupational distribution of Lowell.

In order to facilitate comparability between the total Lowell workforce and the French-Canadian sample, housewives were excluded from the Massachusetts census data. Five individuals who reported site or product only were omitted from the French-Canadian sample.

APPENDIX D

METHODOLOGY FOR INVESTIGATING FAMILY, KIN AND HOUSEHOLD FROM THE U.S. MANUSCRIPT CENSUS OF 1870

Beginning in 1880 the manuscript census records the relationship of each household member to the household head. But in the 1870 manuscript census designations such as "wife," "daughter," boarder," and "servant" are not provided. Marital status is not indicated unless a couple was married within the census year. Family (and household) relationships for 1870 must, therefore, be inferred. Census enumerators were instructed to begin with the nuclear family unit, to list father and mother first, then children, from oldest to youngest. If the parents were dead, the "ostensible" head of household was to appear first. Following children, or in lieu of a family unit, the order of enumeration was "other inmates, lodgers and boarders, laborers, domestics, and servants."[1]. In addition to these position-listing characteristics the 1870 census provides information on household members--surname, age, and sex--which can be used to set up rules for inferring some relationships within households.[2]

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[1]Wright, History of the Census, p. 151.

[2]One researcher has devised a sophisticated computerized method for determining family and household relationships in 1870. B. C. Miller uses the 1880 manuscript census, which does supply relationships among household

The most reliable inferences can be made for nuclear families. In this thesis nuclear families have been identified in the following way. To determine the husband-wife/father-mother relationship an adult male (age 16 or more) must be listed immediately before an adult female (age 16 or more). They must share the same surname. The woman must be of an age which is within +5 and -15 years of the man's age.[3] A child or children must be listed immediately following the two adults. The presumed mother and father must each be at least 15 years older than the child or children.[4] The mother's age cannot have more than a 49-year difference with any of her children.[5] Children must have the same sur-

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members, to set up rules of inference for 1870 households. Because her study covers only Philadelphia households headed by blacks, to apply her rules of inference to Lowell F.C. households is unwise. My impression is that lodging arrangements and family relationships in Franch-Canadian households were very different from those among Philadelphia's black population. If time permitted, however, it would be desirable to apply Miller's method for establishing rules to Lowell French-Canadian households. See Buffington Clay Miller, "A Computerized Method of Determining Family Structure from Mid-nineteenth Century Census Data" (Masters thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1972).

[3]This method cannot take into account cases where men marry much younger women.

[4]I have assumed that women were able to bear children by age 15. Researchers investigating the age of menarch in the nineteenth century agree to this age as a reliable mean. A good survey of the literature on this question is found in J.M. Tanner, Growth at Adolescence, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1962), pp. 52-54.

[5]Age 45 is sometimes used by demographers as the oldest age at which women in the nineteenth century could bear children. See E. A. Wrigley, Population and History (London, 1969), p. 90 and p. 159; and Michael R. Haines, "Fertility, Nuptiality, and Occupation: A Study of Coal Mining Populations and Regions in England and Wales in the

name as their presumed parents.

Inferring other family, kin, and household relationships within 1870 homes from the manuscript census is quite problematic. But guided by certain rules it is possible to identify one-parent families (those headed by widows or widowers), married couples with no children, and kin clusters, as well as a specially designated group, single people. One-parent families have been identified in the same manner as two-parent families except that one parent is obviously absent. Married couples were identified as husbands and wives as they were in nuclear families except that no children are present. A kin cluster has been identified as two or more individuals listed one after the other who share the same surname but who do not fit the requirements of a nuclear family, either one- or two-parent, or of a married couple without children. Single people are adults living in a household where there is no other person with the same surname.

One-parent families can be identified with almost the same degree of assurance as two-parent families. Married people without children are more difficult to identify because of the lack of offspring to help substantiate the assumption

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Mid-nineteenth Century, Journal of Interdisciplinary History 3 (Autumn, [illegible]), [illegible] frequently employed [illegible] age was used [illegible] Page, "Patterns under[illegible] tion of both age and [illegible] II (March, 1977):[illegible] Analysis (Chicago [illegible]

of marriage. A kin cluster is primarily a descriptive term which avoids reading too much into the information at hand. A so-called single individual is, like the married couple, a fairly large assumption. A person identified as single because he or she does not share a common surname with any other member in a household may in fact be related to one or more people in the home. It is important, then, to keep in mind that generalizations regarding French-Canadian family, kin, and household structures in Lowell in 1870 become less accurate and more impressionistic the further they digress from the topic of the nuclear family.

APPENDIX E

SOURCES AND METHOLODOGY FOR DETERMINING STANDARD OF LIVING

Determining Poverty-Line

Annual Incomes

In order to discover how many French-Canadian families in Lowell were living in poverty in 1870, a poverty-line annual income classification scheme was developed from data found in the Massachusetts Bureau of the Statistics of Labor 1875 report on the standard of living of Massachusetts working-class families. As table 24 shows, data on French-Canadian working-class families in the survey has been rank-ordered from low to high in terms of total annual family

TABLE 24

RANKING OF FAMILY INCOMES OF FRENCH-CANADIAN WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES, MASSACHUSETTS, 1875

Family Ranking	No. in family	No. Children Working	Total Family Income	Over-Expenditure/ Surplus	Living Conditions
1	6	0	$310	-45	Poor
2	5	1	320	-39	Poor
3	5	1	322	-25	Poor
4	6	1	340	--	--
5	5	1	341	--	--

TABLE 24--Continued

Family Ranking	No. in Family	No. Children Working	Total Family Income	Over-expenditure/ Surplus	Living Conditions
6	5	1	575	59	poor
7	5	1	583	--	poor
8	4	1	583	-59	fair
9	5	1	587	17	fair
10	6	1	590	--	fair
11	5	1	594	--	fair
12	6	2	623	--	good
13	7	2	650	--	poor
14	4	1	672	8	good
15	5	1	673	16	poor
16	5	2	692	--	good
17	6	2	696	20	good
18	6	2	746	12	fair
19	6	2	751	15	good
20	5	1	754	--	fair
21	5	2	772	20	good
22	7	1	790	--	poor
23	8	2	836	--	fair
24	5	2	851	18	good
25	7	2	876	--	good
26	6	2	883	--	good

SOURCE: Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Sixth Annual Report, 1875, pp. 235-36, 240, 275-76, 293-96, 307, 311-14, 337.

income. Inspection of this table shows that overexpenditures or inferior living conditions, sometimes both, characterized families whose annual income was less than $583. This holds true whether the family had four, five, or six members. Only one family in this group of eight enjoyed fair living conditions, and apparently the price was indebtedness: it reported an overexpenditure of $59 for the year. Families of four to six members with annual incomes exceeding $583 generally managed to live better. Some put savings aside, all but one family enjoyed fair to good living conditions.[1] Although only four families of seven or eight members appear on this table, their yearly incomes demonstrate that at least $800 might have been necessary. The two families in this group with less than $800, No. 13 and No. 22, were not in debt but living conditions were poor. In contrast, the two families with more than $800, No. 23 and No. 25, although failing to accrue savings, had either fair or good living conditions.

It appears from this data that an annual income poverty-line figure for families of four to six members lies just above $583. Only one family of this size earning above this amount experienced poor living conditions; all were at least breaking even in the year, at best achieving a little security in the form of savings. Since the break in family

[1] No. 15 had poor living conditions, perhaps partly through choice because this family reported $16 in savings.

well-being, as inspection of table 24 shows, appears to be between No. 8 and No. 9, $585, the mid-point income between the two, is used as the poverty-line annual income for families of four to six members. For families of seven to nine members a poverty-line annual income of $813 is assumed. This figure represents the midpoint income between families No. 22 and No. 23, that is, between a family of seven members with poor living conditions and a family of eight with fair living conditions. The difference in annual poverty-line income between families of four to six and families of seven to nine is, therefore, $228. Since the census sample also has families larger than nine members, the family budget of $813 may be increased by $228 to arrive at the annual poverty-line budget for families of ten to twelve members of $1,041. These poverty-line figures are only estimates, yardsticks for determining an overall pattern. However, they are based on the actual living situations of some French-Canadian families in Massachusetts who were interviewed in 1875.

In order to classify Lowell French-Canadian families according to these poverty-line annual income categories, their annual incomes had to be determined. Readily accessible wage data does not exist for some of the working-class occupations Lowell French Canadians had. Therefore, not all working-class families in the census sample could be analyzed for the standard of living discussion. Out of the total 171 families in the sample-

working class and non-working class--82 or almost half were considered.[2] The following annual wages for adult males were used:[3]

Common laborer	$376
Cotton mill worker (high)	474
Cotton mill worker (low).	337
Painter	519
Mason	536
Carpenter	562
Blacksmith	605
Machinist	608

Two wage estimates for adult male cotton mill workers were initially employed because of the vagueness of the phrase "works cotton mill" which is all that appears in the manuscript census.[4] Each family income with one or more adult male cotton worker was tallied twice, once using the higher figure, once using the lower figure. Only one family came out straddling two poverty-line categories because of this procedure. Since French-Canadian men at this time--as new immigrant arrivals--were probably more often than not employed in less skilled, low-paying jobs, I ranked this one family in the lower poverty-line category.

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[2]Thirty-six of the 171 families had three members. These families were not considered because the standard of living material on this size family was inadequate in the 1875 survey.

[3]Except for the low cotton mill worker wage of $337 these wages were computed from data found in the Massachusetts Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Seventh Annual Report, 1876, pp. 332-34. The $337 cotton worker wage was computed from data found in the U.S., Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Report on Manufactures, "Factory Report," pp. 46-47. See the discussion in the second section of this appendix, "Real Wages."

[4]See the second section of this appendix, "Real Wages."

The only adult female occupation for which an adequate annual wage figure was available was for a cotton mill worker, $228. Wages for women did not vary above or below this figure greatly. Therefore, it was not necessary to use two wage figures here as was done for adult male cotton workers.[5]

A child's annual wage contribution to the family was considered to be $159. This figure represents the mean earnings of the 27 children age 15 or less who worked in the French-Canadian families who were interviewed in the 1875 survey. Wages of older children living at home--age 16 or more--were tallied on an adult-wage basis.

An example of how families were ranked is useful here. In one family of seven members the father was a common laborer. He earned $376 over the year. Three daughters also worked. One, age 17, was employed in a cotton mill. She earned $228 (adult female cotton-worker wages). Her two younger sisters, ages 15 and 13, were also employed as cotton-mill workers. Because they were under 16 they earned children's wages, estimated as $159 per child. Hence, this family with four wage earners--$376 + $228 + $159 + $159--had an annual income of $922, and ranked "above" the poverty line of $813 for families of this size.[6]

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[5]The $228 figure was computed from the Massachusetts Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Seventh Annual Report, 1876, pp. 132-33.

[6]Because of the estimated quality of the poverty lines I have used a range of ±25 for each level. Thus families of 4-6 have a poverty line income of 585 ±25 or 560-610, families of 7-9 of 813 ±25 or 788-838, and families of 10-12 of 1,041 ±25 or 1,016-1,066.

Table 22 in chapter 6 (see p. 200) was constructed from the same wage figures which were used to rank families according to a poverty line. For example in families of four to six members where the father was a common laborer earning $376 annually the wages of two children were necessary ($159 + $159 = $318) for the family to earn enough to be ranked above the poverty line of $585.

Real Wages

Satisfactory wage data is more readily available for 1875 than 1870. But 1875 was a depression year. Therefore 1875 wages could not be used to determine family incomes for 1870 unless it could be established that they were roughly equivalent to 1870 wages.

Actual annual earnings of employed non-farm working people in the United States after 1872 exhibited a secular downward trend.[7] But real wage indices, since consumer prices also decreased, indicate that non-farm employees could buy more with their earnings in any of the depression years of the 1870s than they could in 1870.[8] Like other non-

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[7]Stanley Lebergott, Manpower in Economic Growth (New York 1964), p. 528. Actual annual earnings in 1870 were $489, in 1875, $423, in 1879, $373. From 1880 the secular trend is upward.

[8]See Jeffrey G. Williamson, Late Nineteenth-Century American Development (New York, 1974), pp. 78-80. Williamson provides three real wage indexes: Stanley Lebergott's, which refers to employed non-farm working people, E.H. Phelps-Brown's, which uses a superior cost-of-living index, and his own index, which modifies the Phelps-Brown index by adjustment for unemployment. The indexes, though differing slightly, all point to increases in real wages over the 1870s.

farm employees, full-time cotton mill workers in New England experienced cuts in their actual wages in the 1870s.[9] By 1875, however, despite lower actual wages, real wages for full-time cotton mill workers were 10 per cent higher than they had been in 1870; in 1880 they were 19 per cent higher than in 1870.[10]

It is not uncommon to find indices of real wages, if computed from wages paid, rising during depressions, primarily because of declines in commodity prices. What creates problems for working people in depressions and hurts their earning power is unemployment. For high unemployment rates may result in an absolute lowering of annual incomes even if real wages show an upward trend.

Fortunately for Lowell's cotton mill workers, unemployment during the depression does not appear to have affected their annual real income adversely. In 1870 the average number of days worked in Lowell was 275 or 46 weeks.[11]

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[9]Robert C. Layer, Earnings of Cotton Mill Operatives, 1850-1914 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1955), p. 47. In 1870 the average actual annual income for a full-time cotton mill worker was $306.71; in 1875, $299.39; in 1880, $263.92. Layer has computed earnings from company records of seven cotton manufacturing establishments, two of which were located in Lowell. The other companies were located in Dover, New Hampshire, Nashua, New Hampshire, Waltham, Massachusetts, and Chicopee, Massachusetts. One group of stockholders shared primary ownership of these companies. The organization of production, management, wages and hours were fairly uniform for these establishments.

[10]Layer, Earnings, p. 47. Layer's real wage index applies to full-time workers. It is 104.6 in 1870, 114.6 in 1875, and 124.5 in 1880.

[11]Six-day work weeks were the rule. Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Fourth Annual Report, 1873, p. 282.

In 1875, in Middlesex County in the midst of the depression, the number had only dropped to 250 days, or almost 42 weeks.[12] Because real wages rose 10 per cent between 1870 and 1875, the loss of four weeks of employment did not lower a worker's yearly earnings. In 1875 cotton workers earned slightly more--.4 per cent--in real wages than they had earned in 1870.[13] Per capita real annual income of Lowell cotton workers, then, was about the same in both years.

Although many French-Canadian women and children worked in cotton factories in 1870, only a minority of French-Canadian men did so. Most worked instead as skilled workers or more often as common laborers. Assuming that French-Canadian men were still seeking employment in these areas in 1875, what may be said about their earning power?

In 1875 in Middlesex County some craftsmen worked about as many days in the year as cotton workers (250). For instance, blacksmiths worked an average of 261 days in 1875, machinists, 258 days, cabinet makers, 250 days. Carpenters, painters, and masons worked less; they averaged 225, 220, and

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[12]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Seventh Annual Report, 1876, pp. 132-33. This is a weighted average (my own). The report provides the total number of days worked by 1208 people distributed in 22 different occupations in cotton mills located in Middlesex County.

[13]Let $46x$ = real wages in 1870 and $42(1.10x)$ = real wages in 1875. $46x < 42(1.10x)$ or $46x < 46.2x$. The percentage increase is .4 because $46.2 - 46 = .2$ and $.2/46 = .004$.

189 days respectively. Common laborers only worked on average 226 days.[14]

The average yearly income for male wage earners in Lowell in 1875 was $513, for females, $221.[15] In Middlesex County in 1875 painters earned $519, slightly more than the average unspecified wage earner in Lowell. Masons and carpenters in Middlesex County had an edge over painters; they earned an average of $536 and $562 respectively. Middlesex-County machinists and blacksmiths had higher annual incomes. Machinists averaged $608 in 1875, blacksmiths, $605.[16] Cotton workers and common laborers, as would be expected, earned much less than craftsmen. The average for Middlesex-County cotton workers was $474 for males, $228 for females, while common laborers who worked in cotton mills earned $376.[17]

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[14]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Seventh Annual Report, 1876, pp. 132-34. The report provides aggregate days employed and number answering. The aggregate has been divided by the number answering to arrive at the average days worked per person in the several occupations mentioned above.

[15]Massachusetts, Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, Seventh Annual Report, 1876, p. 103.

[16]Ibid., pp. 132 and 134.

[17]Ibid., pp. 132-33. The cotton worker figures are weighted averages computed from aggregate wages of 278 males in 15 different occupations and 944 females in 13 different occupations. It was quite unusual for wages of females in any occupation in cotton mills to be above $250 per annum. Most of the occupations which required braun or skill and paid relatively well were filled by males. In such occupations males could earn much more than the average annual wage for males indicates. For instance a mule spinner's average annual earnings in 1875 were $574, a slasher tender's,

Unfortunately, unlike cotton workers, it is not known what these people were earning in real wages either in 1870 or in 1875 or whether they were working less in 1875 than in 1870 because of the depression. However, a real wage index for all non-farm employees in the United States which adjusts for unemployment has been devised. For the 1870s this index varies between a low of 1.57 in 1870 and a high of 1.72 in 1873. For 1875 the index stands at 1.64.[18] Assuming here that real wages for Lowell workers were not lower than those of workers in other parts of the country, it follows that in 1875, despite the spectre of unemployment, Lowell wage earners could expect to earn slightly more over the year than they had in 1870.

In summary, then, the 1875 wage data used to determine the standard of living of Lowell French-Canadian families in 1870 is consistent with 1870 wage realities.

$547, a dyer's, $539. Conversely, however, the average annual income of some male operatives was much less than the overall average. An oiler averaged $335, a card stripper, $311, a common laborer, $337. The average for a common laborer has been computed from the average weekly wages earned in this occupation (multiplied by 42 weeks) in six Massachusetts cotton mills in 1870. See Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, pp. 46-47. The Massachusetts State Census for 1875 does not provide wage data for common laborers who worked in cotton mills.

[18] Williamson, American Development, pp. 78-79. The index here referred to is Williamson's, column 4, table 4.7, p. 79.

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